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DRYDEN *Author*
MAC FLECKNOE *Title*

EDITED WITH

*Introduction, Text, Paraphrase, Notes,
Annotations, Questions & Answers, etc.*

J. LAHIRI

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CONTENTS

A. General Introduction :	1—49
Chapter I. The Age of Dryden.	3
The Socio-Political Background and the Literary Scene. The Augustan Age—Decay of and Reaction to Romanticism—French Influence—Dryden as Spokesman of the Age.	
Chapter II. Life and Works of Dryden.	8
1. Life : Memoirs in Four stages— (a) 1659-1668 ; (b) 1668-1681 ; (c) 1681-88 ; (d) 1688-1700.	
2. Works : (a) Poetry ; (b) Drama and (c) Criticism.	
Chapter III. The Satirical Background.	27
1. What is Satire ? 2. A Historical Sketch of the Development of English Satire (upto Pope). 3. Satire as a Literary Form—Aim, Kinds, Nature and Future of Satire. 4. The Satiric Spirit of the Age. 5. Dryden as a Satirist. 6. Dryden and Pope as	

Satirists. 7. The Satiric Art in "Mac Flecknoe" as compared With Pope's "Rape of the Lock.

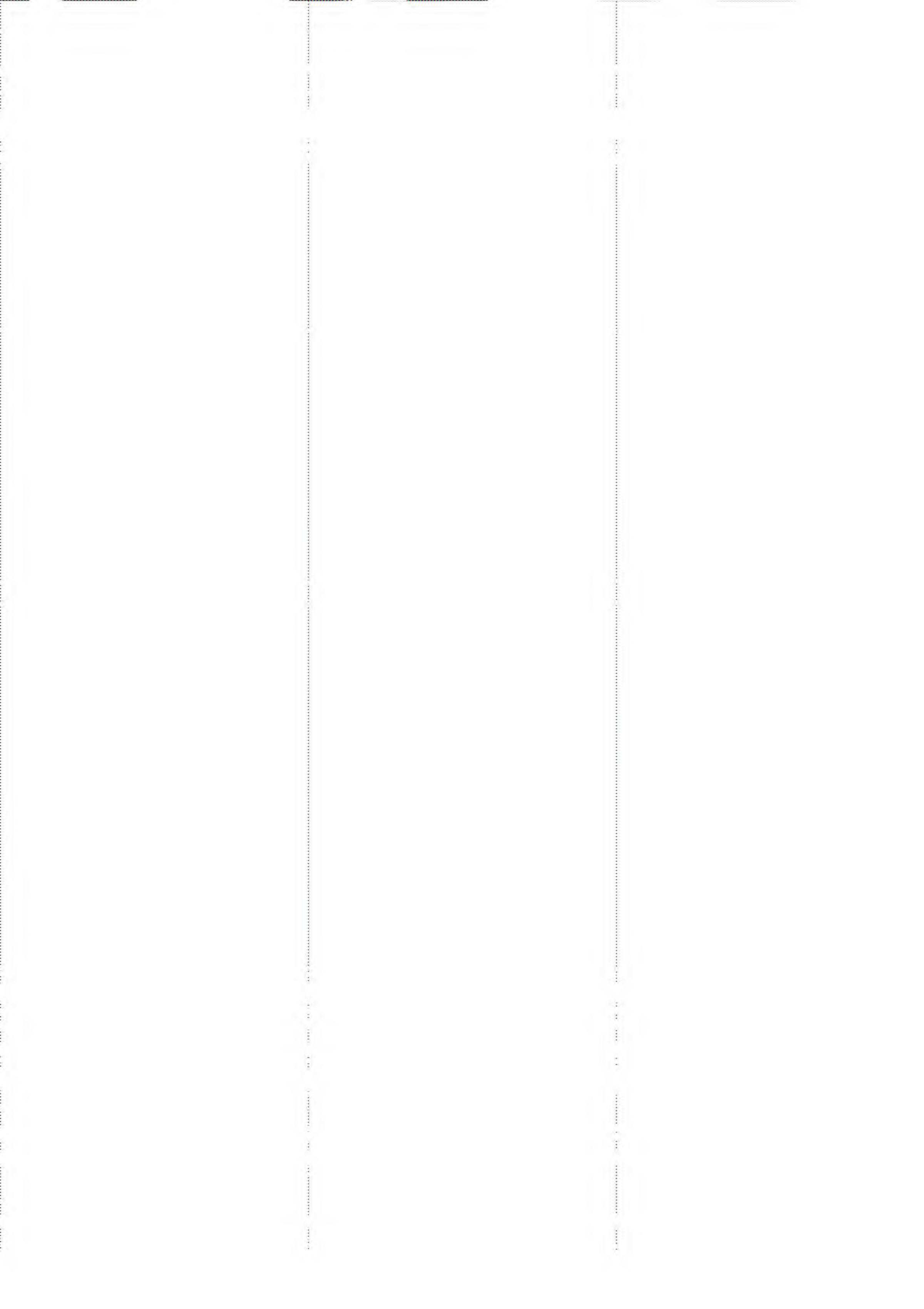
B. Special Introduction to Mac Flecknoe :	51—87
Chapter IV. The Title.	53.
Chapter V. The Political Background.	55
The Occasion for the Composition.	
Chapter VI. The Question of Authorship.	60.
Chapter VII. The Biographical Background.	62
1. Life of Shadwell. 2. Dryden's Portraiture of Shadwell and its justification. 3. Dryden's Portraiture of other persons Satirised and: 4. The justification of these Satires.	
Chapter VIII. A Critical Appraisal of Mac Flecknoe.	68.
1. The Scheme and Execution of Mac Flecknoe.	
2. Analytical Synopsis.	
3. Critical Appreciation.	
Chapter IX. The Heroic Couplet and Dryden.	77
1. The Historical Background (upto 18th Century).	
2. Dryden's Use of the Couplet.	

Chapter X. The Place of Dryden in English Literature and his Genius in relation to his Age.

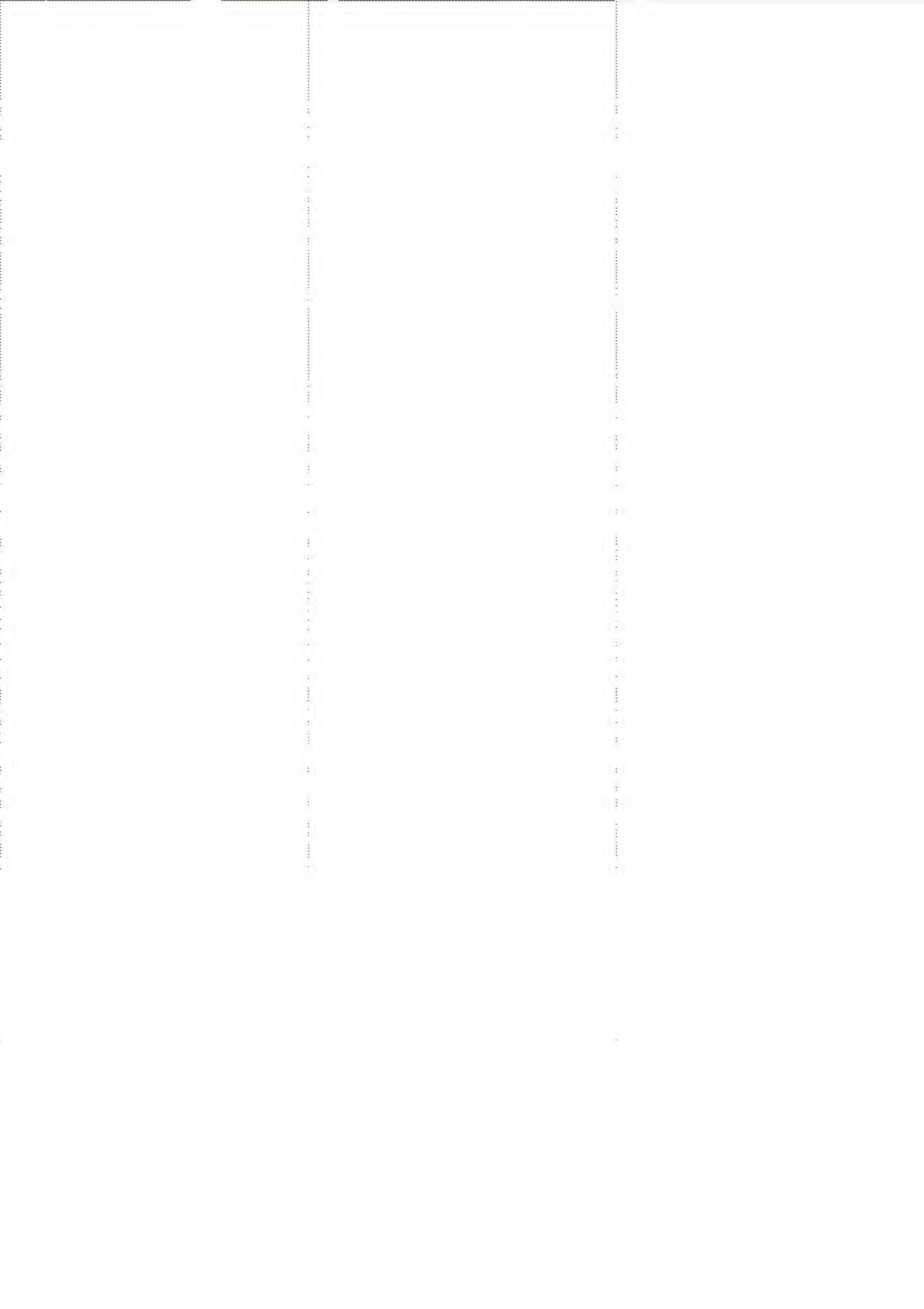
80

1. The place of Dryden. 2. His Genius. 3. General Estimate as a Classical and Didactic Poet—Dryden as a Poet.

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| (a) | Text with Paraphrase and Word-Notes. | 89—109 |
| (b) | Exhaustive Notes With Comments. | 111—158 |
| (c) | Appendix I. Important Annotations and Explanations. | 159—166 |
| (d) | Appendix II. Important Questions and Model Answers. | 167—175 |
| (e) | Appendix III. Index to Notes. | 176—179 |
| (f) | Appendix IV. Index to Introduction. | 180—181 |
| (g) | Appendix V. Select Bibliography. | 182—183 |



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CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF DRYDEN

The Socio-Political Background and the Literary Scene

(The Augustan Age—Decline of and Reaction to Romanticism—French Influence—Dryden as the Spokesman of the Age.)

The age of Dryden is called the Augustan Age in English Literature. 'Augustan' is a term derived from the prestige of Latin literature in the age of Augustus because during his reign Virgil, Horace, Ovid and others flourished. The term 'Augustan Age' has, thus, come to mean "a period of highest refinement of any national literature". As applied to English literature, it normally refers in England to the years about 1680 to 1750, the period of Dryden and Pope. The Augustan age of English poetry grounded its claim on "classicism" on a fancied resemblance to the Roman poets of the golden age of Latin poetry during the reign of Emperor Augustus. Its authors saw themselves each as a second Virgil, a second Ovid, most of all, a second Horace. They endeavoured to form their poetry on the lines laid down in the critical writings of the original Augustan age. They tacitly and sometimes openly assumed that the kinds, modes of treatment and all the minor details of literature *e. g.* figures of speech, use of epithets and the rest—had been settled once for all by the ancients in complete forms.

"Classicism" in English literature came to be regarded as an essential quality of the original Augustan age in a kind of degenerate "neo-classicism" in the present set-up which

affected great admiration of the ancients and a rigid code of critical values and literary forms. The authors of this "neo-classical" age so christened themselves because they rigidly followed these rules. They fancied that they had imbibed the temper of the Augustan time—*i. e.*, the temper displayed in the works of Horace more than in those of any one else—its urbanity, its critical spirit, its deification of wit and intelligence, its love of good sense and moderation, its instinctive distrust of emotion, imagination and enthusiasm and its invincible good breeding. Most of these characteristics are to be found in Pope and his contemporaries ; but some of them are also to be found in the time of Dryden in whom, however, the Elizabethan qualities of rhetoric and eloquence in prose, some faint stirring of the lyrical impulse and flights of imagination, conceits and bombast in verse still remained. Thus classical leanings, traceable to some extent in Dryden became much more prominent and pronounced in the age of Pope in classical evenness, a preference for wit and elegance and for intelligence rather than emotional satisfaction. This tradition survived throughout the greater part of the 18th century up till the closing years when romantic richness, exuberance, passion, emotion, the source of mystery and the creative spirit in literature again began to reappear in a kind of Romantic Revival in all its tumult and glamour. In English literature it was marked by a revolt against the conventionalised language and metres of Augustan poetry. This revolt dates from the publication of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798, but its beginnings can be traced much earlier. The Age of Dryden preceded by the earlier romanticism of the Elizabethan age, and was a reaction to it on account of its weaknesses. Even in Elizabeth's day these weaknesses of the earlier Romanticism *viz.*, its lack of form, its variability, its proneness to extravagance, emotionalism and turgidity, were being felt.

The restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660, marked the beginning of a new era in literature as

well as in the socio-political life of England, which was no longer disturbed by the agitations of the Civil War and the rigours of the Commonwealth. Men's thoughts now began to be directed to problems of civic and national life whose purification became the absorbing topic of the day. This dawn of fresh interests had already become well-marked in the later writings of Bacon and Milton, who were active politicians. "But the full significance of this change in men's outlook was not realised till the Restoration, when Dryden became the spokesman of the new age." This spirit of the new age had already been in evidence in the later poems of Abraham Cowley, and in the polished verse of Edmund Waller and Sir John Denham till it frankly and unmistakably proclaimed itself as a distinctly new note in literature with the coming of Dryden. The change was not due to a mere fluctuation of literary fashion but was deeply grounded in the life of the time. It was the first age in which the ordinary man came into his own. None of the classes or activities of the average citizen was new; what was new was that for the first time the whole of life in its ordinary aspects became a source of interest and generally of comedy. Pre-Augustan writing did little to call to mind any extensive public. The works of Spenser, Donne, Herbert, Browne and Milton were written partly for their own sakes and partly for the reader as a single person, not as one of a wide community. On the other hand, Restoration comedy, the satires and prefaces of Dryden—the prose of pamphleteers, essayists and novelists and verses of almost all Augustan poets, "call up an inescapable notion of an extended public". Thus the wild speculative interests and imaginative exuberance of the Renaissance gave place to a practical application of these ideals to actual day-to-day existence. As a natural corollary, the literature of the period became involved with the problems of practical politics. "France no less than England shared in this reaction from Romanticism, the enthusiasm for affairs rather than ideas; and at this juncture political

conditions connected with the Restoration brought the influence of France into special contact with English life and letters. In France a brilliant set of writers had arisen. They were actuated by classical methods which exerted a profound influence upon the literature of Europe. This influence upon England was specially marked for Court reasons. Much of Charles's exile had been spent in France; he had been attracted towards its literature and did his best to enforce the ideals he saw there, actuating English literature."

The change involved the substitution of the critical for the imaginative spirit, the extravagance and emotionalism of the Elizabethans. The old order in literature, with its Elizabethan conventions and sources of inspiration, was dead and the writers of the age found their inspiration in the academic spirit that was already controlling their fellow craftsmen in France. The desire for 'order' was a prepossession to which the Augustans were moved both by the disorder, the eccentricity and the extravagance of preceding Romantic literature and the belief that it had a divine sanction, as Dennis asserts, "there is nothing in Nature that is great and beautiful without rule and order. If you had asked them to state as simply and broadly as possible their purpose, they would have said it was to follow Nature, it would turn out that they thought of it mainly as the opposite of Art and the negation of what was fantastic, tortured or far-sought in thinking or writing." The classical school aimed at simplicity of style as a normal standard of writing. For this end, amongst others, they and the men of science founded the Royal Society which had for its aims—clearness, plainness, conversational ease and directness. They insisted upon a natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear sense, a native easiness bringing all things as near mathematical plainness as they can; and preferring the language of the artisans, country-men and merchants before that of wits and scholars.

Dryden did not start the new literary movement of the age making a change from the romantic to the classical manner. But he invariably saw which way 'the new literary wind was blowing'. So he set his craft in the same direction and taking a singular advantage of the movement, he stamped his vigorous intellect upon experimental forms on which lesser men had already embarked. It would also not be extravagant to say that during the last twenty years of the seventeenth century Dryden was also far in advance of his contemporaries in all branches of literary work, in which his works not only represented the whole literary movement in England for the best part of half a century but also contained the germs and the direction along which literary movement for nearly a century more developed in the age of Pope and Johnson. Dryden crystallises in the eminent degree the emotional and intellectual attitude of his age in his works.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND WORKS OF DRYDEN

A. Life of Dryden (1631-1700)

John Dryden—the founder of the important dynasty of English poets, the acknowledged leader of many literary movements of his time, one of the most distinguished among poets of the secondary rank and the father of English criticism—was born on the 9th of August, 1631, at Aldwincle where his father, the Rev. Erasmus Dryden, the third son of the Baronet, Sir Erasmus, was Rector. His mother was Mary Pickering, daughter of the Rector of Aldwincle All Saints. Both the Drydens and the Pickerings were well-to-do families with Puritan and Parliamentary leanings and sympathies.

Young Dryden was educated at Oundle and later at Westminster under the famous headmaster, Dr. Busby. His first attempts at verse composition date from this period. He, then, proceeded to Cambridge and, after a stay of four years, left the University in 1657.

While at school, Dryden wrote a poem for collection of elegies on the death of Lord Hastings. At the University also he wrote some not very memorable verse. According to Saintsbury, these poems show rather “a considerable literary feeling after poetic style, and above all, peculiar virtue that was to be Dryden’s own.”

It is quite possible that Dryden’s career at Cambridge was marred by some unfortunate occurrence and there may be some truth in Shadwell’s abusive lines—

At Cambridge first your scurrilous vein began,
Where saucily you traduced a noble man,
Who for that crime traduced you on the head,
And you had been expelled had you not fled.

It will not, however, be wise to rely entirely on the evidence of one who was his adversary though a fellow poet. The following lines on Oxford show that Dryden had no respect for his teachers of his own University—

Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
Than his own mother University ;
Thebes did his greeny unknowing youth engage,
He chooses Athens in his riper age.

Arriving in London he devoted himself to politics and literature in 1657. He became secretary to Sir George Pickering, his cousin, on his mother's side who stood high in the Protector, Cromwell's favour. The death of Cromwell in 1658 gave him his first opportunity to appear in the limelight by publishing a copy of verses to deplore the event, viz., *The Heroic Stanzas on the Death of the Lord Protector*. It was written in quatrain (heroic) stanzas. The publication of this poem may be said to inaugurate his political career and his biography may be conveniently divided into four epochs, viz., (a) The first period begins from the year of the publication of this poem to that of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in 1668, (b) The second to the appearance of *Spanish Friar* in the autumn of 1681, (c) the third to the publication of the *Britannia Rediviva* in June 1688, and (d) the fourth to his death in 1700.

(a) 1659—1668

When his first important poem appeared in 1659, Dryden had reason to think that Richard would continue the work of his father. But this was not to be. After nearly 18 months of anarchy Charles II, who had been

spending much of his exile in France—where he was attracted towards French literature of the day dominated by a brilliant set of writers, actuated by classical models—ascended the throne of his ancestors. Nothing daunted, the young poet, however, quickly got over his discomfiture by ingratiating himself with the Royalists, and by bringing out his *Astraea Redux*. (a poem on the happy restoration and return of his sacred majesty Charles II) in 1660, in sharp contrast with his very recent eulogy of and Elegy on the death of Cromwell produced in so indecent a haste. This was followed by a Coronation Poem [a Panegyric on the King's Coronation (April, 1661)] and the *Epistle to the Lord Chancellor* (New Year's Day, 1662), thereby confirming his conversion to the Royalist party. How complete Dryden's Royalist conversion was and how fullsome was his eulogy of Charles II will be evident from these lines—

“In open Prospect nothing bounds our Eye
Until the Earth seems joined unto the Sky
So in this Hemisphere our utmost view
Is only bounded by our King and you.”

This was the first of the many somersaults of his chequered career. We have already seen how his famous prologue to the University of Oxford, displays his exquisite capacity for flattery, his command over versification and his inexplicable antipathy to his own *alma mater*—an antipathy confirmed by his seeking his Master's Degree rather at Lambeth than at Cambridge. In June, 1668, the M. A. Degree was conferred upon him by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

All these early poems were written in heroic couplets. This was almost a native gift, which was to be so sequently exercised, developed and perfected by enormous practice in play-writing in later years. As contrasted with his own use, the versification of some of his predecessors like Marston, Butler, Cleveland and Marvell were harsh, rugged, uncouth and even grotesque.

In November, 1662, Dryden became a member of the newly-founded Royal Society which began to exact from all its members "a close, naked, natural way of speaking". In the following year his interest in science found expression in a copy of verses addressed to Dr. Walter Charleton. According to Hallam, this is the first of Dryden's poems which "possesses any considerable merit."

By this time he started working as journeyman-writer to his publisher, Herringman. He now took two important steps which were to affect his future life greatly. The first was that in 1663 he began to work for the stage, which had now been revived directly after the Restoration and which was, then, the only profitable field for one who had to depend on play-writing for his livelihood. From 1663 to 1681 Dryden courted the dramatic muse. The 'stage had opened a new field for the wits of the day and had already become popular with the aristocracy and the populace. Dryden turned to play-writing as it was the most lucrative branch of the literary profession of the time, although he had no particular liking for it. He, now, entered upon the work of producing comedies, tragedies and tragi-comedies in profusion. A few were comedies in prose. Most of the tragedies were written in the heroic couplet on the model of the French tragic drama and only a few of them were in blank verse. His first effort in drama "*The Wild Gallant*", was a failure.

This was about time when Dryden married the Lady Elizabeth Howard, the sister of Sir Robert Howard. Although this marriage brought him a welcome addition to his resources, it proved to be an unhappy one, "the Lady Elizabeth lacking that strong and purposeful character so characteristic of her husband." Probably his wife was ill-tempered. But Dryden himself was no more a model of conjugal propriety. There is another charge of Dryden's association with a Mrs. Reeve, an actress. There is exceedingly little information obtainable about the early part of Dryden's life. "It is one of the misfortunes of prominent

men that when fact is silent about their lives, fiction is busy." That Dryden lived unhappily with his wife is perhaps a fact, for he sneered at matrimony in his dramas. It is also significant that in his poems Dryden is, if not a misogynist, a hater of marriage. But much of the stories about the doubtful character and bad temper of his wife and her relation with her husband are mere heresays. Here is a typical specimen of one circumstantial legend which has been much relied on. "Dryden, it is said, was at work one day in his study, when his wife came in, and could not make him listen to something which she had to say. Thereupon, said she in a pet, 'I wish I were a book, and then perhaps you would pay me some attention'. 'Then, my dear,' replied this graceless bard, 'Pray, be an almanac, that I may change you at the end of the year.' The joke cannot be said to be brilliant, but, taking it as a true story, the notion of founding a charge of conjugal unhappiness thereon, is sufficiently absurd.....All that can be said is, that the few allusions to Lady Elizabeth in the poet's letters, are made in all propriety, and tell no tale of disunion." (Saintsbury).

Although his first dramatic effort "*The Wild Gallant*" may be set down as a failure, it attempted "*The Comedy of Humours*", as it was then called and continued to be so called till the more polished "*Comedy of Manners*" evolved by Wycherley and Congreve. His next venture, "*The Rival Ladies*", a tragi-comedy, was a pronounced success. The important thing about it is the dedicatory Epistle to the Lord of Orrery. This was the first of those delightful critical prefaces which form one of the most valuable and pleasing portions of his writings; for it was not so much his dramas as these prefaces he wrote to them that contributed to his lasting fame. Next year, he produced *The Indian Queen* which was a great success. This was his first "heroic play" in English followed by more in the same line. "*The Elegy on Cromwell's Death*" was his first attempt to make use of the four-line heroic stanza which Sir William

Davenant had already made popular. Dryden gave a very interesting account of the origin and character of 'heroic plays' in his essay prefixed to "*The Conquest of Granada*." His next venture in the same line was *The Indian Emperor* (1665) followed by '*Tyrannic Love*', the two parts of '*Almanzor and Almahide*' or the *Conquest of Granada* and, *Aurengzebe* and "*The Maiden Queen*". All this enormous practice in play-writing combined with his native gifts, made the heroic couplet a natural vehicle to Dryden for any form of discourse or verse-argument in later years. He reproduced three of Shakespeare's plays and dramatised a portion of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (as *The State of Innocence*) in heroic metre. In 1665, an outbreak of plague in London led to the closure of the theatres and compelled him to leave for the country at Charlton Park—the seat of his father-in-law. He occupied his time in the production of two remarkable works—*The Annus Mirabilis* (1667) and *The Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668); which may be said to mark epochs in the history of English literature. The former is a historical narrative of the chief incidents of the year 1666—The War with Holland, the Plague and the Fire of London. It was written in heroic quatrain stanzas. "It exhibits with singular precision the characteristics of that School of Poetry of which Dryden was to be the leader—"*The Poetry of Rhetoric*," His "*Essay of Dramatic Poesy*" was in the form of a dialogue between interlocutors. It remains a masterpiece of able criticism. It established his position as the greatest authority in literary criticism. It is noteworthy for its defence of rhyme in drama. By the end of 1667 Dryden had established himself as a dramatist, as a poet and as a literary critic in the modern sense of the term.

(b) 1668—1681

On his return to London he entered into a contract with the company of the King's Theatre. As a result of this fruitful partnership, he was assured of a steady annual

income of about three to four hundred pounds for the next five years. In 1670 he was appointed Poet Laureate and Historiographer of the Court of Charles II on a salary of £ 200 a year. The King also granted him an additional pension of £ 100 a year. By this time Dryden had become very familiar with most of the nobles of Charles's court and Etherege, Mulgrave, Sedley and Rochester were among his special intimates or patrons. "This somewhat questionable boast which he made of this familiarity Nemesis was not long in punishing, and the instrument which Nemesis chose was Rochester himself." Rochester had already disoblged Dryden as early as 1675 and now an incident happened in 1679 when Dryden had a much serious taste of Rochester's malivolence. A manuscript on an *Essay on Satire*, containing attacks on the King, and Rochester, among others, was circulated. Dryden could have no motive for attacking the King of all persons. Possibly it was written by some aspiring poetasters of the time but Rochester chose to identify Dryden as the author. Shortly after this Dryden was attacked while going home one night and beaten by masked men. This matter was considered by critics to be a disgrace to Dryden. Besides, the public notice taken of his dramatic works involved him in a series of quarrels. Dryden's official position as Poet Laureate and the success of his "heroic plays" evidently aroused the jealousy of some of his contemporaries. The Duke of Buckingham was, then, one of the leading wits and prominent in Court also. He had long his eye on what he considered to be the over-done heroics of Dryden which he now attacked in *The Rehearsal*. The central figure of the piece is a silly and concerted dramatist, Bayes, who resembled Dryden in every particular including his favourite oaths. Dryden had the mortification of hearing the audience of the very theatre" which had, a few nights before, been ringing with the sonorous couplets of his *Siege of Granada*, now hoarse with laughing at ludicrous parodies of his favourite passages and most effective scenes." (J. C. C.)

His old enemy, Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, got a poetaster, called Elkanah Settle write a play entitled, *The Empress of Morocco*, which was inscribed to the Earl of Norwich in a dedication in which Dryden was studiously insulted. Anyway *The Rehearsal* did not kill Dryden's heroic plays, but it did set him thinking furiously whether it was worth his while to consider something else than verse "as the highest pattern of human life" and ultimately turn "to fresh woods and pastures new." As for dealing with Buckingham, he did not choose to give an immediate reply but bided his time to take up the challenge at the earliest opportunity.

(c) 1681—1688

The circumstances of the time were favourable to a great development of satire. The recent civic strife imparted the satiric spirit. The place of Butler—the last of the medieval satirists was also vacant. He had also been nursing his wrath against Buckingham in silence. So he turned from play-writing to political satire and produced his famous political poem—*Absalom and Achitophel* in 1681 which opened a new chapter in his career. The years 1681 and 1682 saw the culmination of Dryden's genius in satires. In this brilliant satire he took up the cause of the Court party in the controversies then raging over the Bill to exclude James, the Duke of York, from the throne. It was a terrible attack mainly on the Earl of Shaftesbury, the central figure in the Opposition and his ally, the Duke of Buckingham who had ridiculed him in *The Rehearsal*. This was speedily followed by *The Medal*, a satire against sedition, in 1682. The subject is Shaftesbury in whose honour a medal had been struck to celebrate his escape from a charge of treason. The political satirist seldom gets long unanswered. So the replies by the persons satirised were "full of dreary flatness and unmannerly violence." Shadwell, the chief poet on the Whig side, retaliated with a scurrilous and brutal attack entitled *The Medal of John*

Bayes which provoked a counterblast in Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*, the most severe of all personal satires in English (except the *Vision of Judgment*), which served as a model for Pope's *Dunciad*.

Dryden's zeal for Protestantism fed him to produce his *Religio Laici*, a defence of the Church of England against dissenting sects, simultaneously with the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, written chiefly by Nahum Tate, to which Dryden contributed some 200 lines. When Charles II died on February 5, 1685, Dryden celebrated an ode, *Threnodia Augustalis*. With the succession of James II to the throne Dryden announced his conversion to Roman Catholicism. It is difficult to account for the rational of his conversion whether from time-serving instincts (as James II was a Roman Catholic) or out of conscientious conviction. How could the same man give expression to some of his profoundest religious convictions and zeal for Protestantism in *Religio Laici* in 1682 and in four years' time change those very convictions and vindicate his new faith in *The Hind and the Panther* in 1686? *The Hind and the Panther* is a long defence of the Catholic faith in heroic verse. The same year he wrote his first *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*. His conversion from Protestantism to Romanism at a time when the latter was in favour at Court, laid him open to suspicion as to his sincerity. The following year (1688) when James II was driven from England by the Great Revolution which gave the throne to the Protestant William and Mary, Dryden lost his post and the pension of £ 100 that had been conferred on him of late.

(d) 1688—1700

With Protestantism once more in the ascendant on the accession of William and Mary in 1688, Dryden lost everything except what remained of his private fortune and his savings. His pension was withdrawn and he lost all his offices, including the Laureateship to which Shadwell,

his adversary, was appointed, to the discredit of the administration. Nothing daunted by those spurns of Fate, Dryden once more in his sixty-seventh year devoted himself to classical literature which inspired him to undertake translations from the Latin of Juvenal, Perseus and his Virgil—all of which now opened up fresh sources of income. In the same year he wrote his best-known poems including his second Ode, now entitled *Alexander's Feast*. His modernizations of Chaucer, Boccaccio etc., under the title of *Fables* and translation of the classics were two pieces of literary work which were peculiarly suited to his temperament and no man knew public taste better than Dryden. Six months after the publication of his well-known *Fables* Dryden died in 1700.

B. Chronological Table of Dryden's Works

1631	9th August—Birth of John Dryden.
1658	Herioc stanzas (quatrains) on the death of Cromwell.
1660	<i>Astraea Redux</i> , a panegyric on the coronation on the return of Charles II in which he first showed his mastery of the heroic couplet.
1662	A poem to Lord Clarendon, the new Lord Chancellor confirming his Royalist conversion.
1662	A few other poems of the complimentary kind to Dr. Charleton.
1663	The Wild Gallant (play in prose acted in 1663).
1664	The Rival Ladies (a tragi-comedy, acted in 1664).
1665	Verses to the Duchess of York and to Lady Castlemaine.
1665	The Indian Emperor (a heroic play dealing with the Conquest of Mexico by Cortez—very popular and is one of the best of its kind).

- 1667 Annus Mirabilis—non-dramatic poetry.
- 1668 An Essay on Dramatic Poesy—a critical treatise.
- 1670 Almanzor and Almanide or the Conquest of Granada.
- 1673 Marriage a-la-Mode (a comedy produced in 1673).
- 1676 Aurengzebe—his last rhymed tragedy.
- 1678 All for Love—his first drama in blank verse (a version of the story of Antony and Cleopatra).
- 1679 An adaptation of Troilus and Cressida.
- 1681 The Spanish Fryar—an attack on the Papists.
- 1681 Absalom and Achitophel—his famous political poem and satire against Shaftesbury, Buckingham and others.
- 1682 The Medal—a satire aimed at Shaftesbury again.
- 1682 Religio Laici—a defiance of Protestantism.
- 1684 Mac Flecknoe—best personal satire against Shadwell,
- 1685 Threnodia Augustalis—Ode on the death of Charles II.
- 1687 Ode for St. Cecilia's Day (Ist).
- 1687 The Hind and the Panther—a defiance of Romanism after his conversion in 1687.
- 1693 Translation in verse of Persius and the Satires of Juvenal.
- 1694 Love Triumphant—a tragi-comedy.
- 1697 Translation of Virgil and parts of Horace, Ovid, Homer, Theocritus and Lucretius Alexander's Feast.
- 1699 Fables, Ancient and Modern—(a collection of

paraphrases of tales by Chaucer, Boccaccio and Ovid.

1700 Death of John Dryden.

C. The works of John Dryden.

(A) Poetry.

His first poem was an Elegy on Lord Hastings. It was written in couplets. The verse is rather ragged and the eulogy is also unrestrained. His next was a *Complimentary Poem to Hoddeston* and third is an *Epistle to Honor Driden*. All three show a considerable literary faculty, a feeling after poetic style and, above all, the peculiar virtue which was to be Dryden's own. They are all saturated with conceits—the reigning delicacy of the time.

The first poem of any importance was that of 1658 composed in memory of Oliver Cromwell, in quatrain (heroic) stanzas. It is full of admirable lines and thoughts. No better eulogy of the Protector has been written to this day.

Dryden turned a warm Royalist by celebrating the return of King Charles II in his *Astra Redux* which contrasts oddly with his rather recent eulogy on Cromwell. His *Annus Mirabilis* is the crowning effort of his first poetic period. It deals with the two great events of the 'wonderful year'—the War with Holland and the Fire of London. Here also Dryden indulges in the most fantastic conceits. But in spite of its obvious faults, the masculine vigour and the lucidity of the poem, reveal an immense development in his genius. This work marks the definite establishment of the "classical school" of poetry in England. There is unmistakable sign of the "energy" divine for which the author was to be famed and a sure indication of the varied cadence and subtle disposed music which were in his hands to free the couplet from all charges of monotony and tameness. Dryden soon developed "a Masterly

treatment of the form and of giving the phrase a turn at once so clear and so individual, and of weighing the verse with such dignity and at the same time writing it with such lightly flying speed." *Annus Mirabilis* shows the influence of Davenant but the characteristics of the master in his poetical adolescence are displayed here to the fullest extent.

Dryden's satires stand in a class by themselves. His famous political poems are satiric and didactic. His works in the line of satire fixed for generations the course of English satire. After its masterly handling in *Absalom and Achitophel*, there could be no doubt as to the fitness of the heroic couplet as the vehicle. The consummation character *Sketches* set an example which could not fail to be useful so long as political controversy endured. The superiority of *Absalom and Achitophel* has led to an undue neglect of the *Medal* which would have made the reputation of any satirist before Dryden. In "*Mac Flecknoe*" Dryden breaks fresh ground viz., personal literary satire based on the happy conception of an Empire of Dullness." The great merit of *Absalom* is its superb gallery of portraits. The secret of Dryden's success is his consummate mastery of style, his instinct for the right word in the right place and his power to condense without losing his pellucid clearness."

Dryden was fully aware of the fact that the highest evils of poetry are not open to satire which is, after all, a relatively low form of literature, just because it embodies a relatively small element of truth. He knew that to be a successful satirist, one must be imbued with the spirit of justice and fairness so that in a momentary virtuous indignation against his adversary he must not withhold positive praise where praise was due. It is Dryden's recognition of the good with the bad that gave his satires an added grace of variety.

Dryden's two great doctrinal poems are *Religio Laici* and the *Hind and the Panther*. The former is undoubtedly

the best English didactic poem. It is not without touches of humour. Its doctrine seems to be that the middle way is the best. The *Hind and the Panther* will also occupy a very high place among didactic poems in the English language. It was written after Dryden had changed his faith. It is in part satirical. Both are theological and controversial and, written as they are from two opposed points of view, they are curiously interesting as exhibiting Dryden's mastery in the conduct of an argument in verse and his extraordinary skill in making the most of whatever position he might for the moment adopt. But consistency was in no matter Dryden's great characteristic and the arguments of *Religio Laici*, are not more inconsistent with the arguments of the *Hind and the Panther* than the handling of the question of rhymed plays in the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* is with the argument against them in the prefaces and dissertations subsequent to *Aurengzebe*.

His *Fables* were written amidst the anxieties of his last years and under the increasing burden of age and ill-health. They give him a title to rank among the best story-tellers in verse. They met a felt need. No man could ever feel the pulse of the public and gauge the public taste better than Dryden. No one was ever better qualified to translate the greatest of Roman poets than Dryden.

His poetry is thoroughly representative of the age in limitations such as imaginative power, depth of feelings, spiritual glow or fervour and their merits, namely, their wit, strength, vigour of intellect and all the rest of it. Dryden made the Ode, live on as an English form and prepared the ground for Collins and Gray. *St. Cecilia's Day* inspired Dryden to write an Ode on the festival and another—*Alexander's Feast* on the power of music. "It is hard to find a more suitable description of these poems than is conveyed by the term ingenious. As a lyric-writer he is judged better by the songs with which his plays are interspersed and a number of hymns attributed to him. The songs testify to very high lyrical quality. This is indeed very

surprising for a poet whose greatest triumphs were won in the fields of satire and argumentative verse. There are indeed few things which better illustrate the range of his genius than these exquisite snatches. "For a poet belonging to the later 17th century this singular gift was a kind of swansong before the death-like slumber which, with few and brief intervals, was to rest upon English lyrics for a hundred years. before they burst into songs again with the dawn of Romanticism.

(B) Drama

Dramatic work went somewhat against the grain with Dryden. He took up play-writing because it was the most fashionable of literary occupations and also much the most lucrative.

He attempted various comedies, tragedies and tragicomedies ; a few of his plays were comedies in prose and most of the tragedies are in the heroic couplet on the French model of tragic drama while a few only are in blank verse. He also wrote heroic plays, operas and masques.

Of all the arts, the drama is most conditioned by the social milieu. The age was deficient in poetic feeling. Everything was viewed in an intellectual and critical spirit. So Restoration drama easily took the imprint of the prevailing social manners. Comedy lost its ideal universality and universal appeal. The characteristic dramatic form was the comedy of manners, reflecting the gaiety, foppery, insolence and intrigue of the aristocratic group, which political changes had suddenly brought into prominence and authority. Wit succeeded to humour while sarcasm, invective and irony succeeded to sympathetic merriment and good-humoured raillery.

All these new trends are to be noted first in Dryden's first play, the *Wild Gallant* (1663) which, although it proved to be a failure, it showed a skilful contrivance of light

intrigue in the manner of the Spanish drama. His *Rival Ladies* (1664) was well-conceived and was a pronounced success. His next, the *Indian Queen* was his first heroic play in verse. It revealed to him where his real strength lay, and emboldened him to undertake fresh variations in the line of heroic plays after Sir William Davenant e. g., *Tyrannic Love* the two parts of *Almanzor* and *Almahide* or the *Conquest of Granada* and *Aurengzebe*. His great defect viz., inability to create a character was made up by other gifts.

The 'heroic drama' a term applied to Restoration tragedies usually written in rhymed heroic couplets though it was not essential to the concept e. g., Dryden's *All For Love* were written in blank verse tragedies which preserved all the essential features of the heroic play. The important thing in regard to this type of Restoration tragedy is that it must have all the qualities of the heroic poem or epic e. g., to raise admiration chiefly for three virtues viz., valour beauty and love. Usually, the characters were exaggerated and spoke in terms of bombast and rant. The plots were evolved out of actions of kings and queens with a background of war, love and jealousy and last of all, a happy ending for the hero and heroine, because the Restoration audience, on the whole, preferred to avoid the spectacle of ultimate disaster, as in the great tragedies of Shakespeare. This type of the heroic drama was parodied notably in *The Rehearsal*. Under modern conditions it has not been revived because of its apparent absurdities, habitual exaggerations and remoteness from life.

The purpose of the heroic drama was didactic viz., to advance the characters of virtue in the shapes of valour and conjugal love. The heroic drama invariably used the heroic metre, after the French convention. Dryden defended his use of rhyme in breach of the tradition of blank verse already established by Shakespeare by declaring: "Blank verse is acknowledged to be too low for a poem, any more for a paper of verses; but if too low for any ordinary sonnet; how much more for tragedy."

Under Dryden's leadership the heroic tragedy occupied the stage almost exclusively from 1660 to 1678. Then Dryden shifted his ground, dropping rhyme and questioning the validity of the "*Unities*" in the conditions of the English stage. His play *Tyrannie Love* was his second experiment in the heroic vein and in the *Conquest of Granada* (1669). This type of play reached its culmination points. After the burlesque of heroic tragedies by Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671) the heroic type of drama was never quite the same afterwards. Dryden's *All for Love* (1678) (which is based on the story of Antony and Cleopatra) gave further proof of his altered attitude which showed that he was already trying to free himself from French conventions and to strike out a new line of his own altogether.

When Dryden first embarked on his experiment on "the heroic drama", he considered verse and rhyme to be *the highest patterns of human life*". So, he became its best exponent and more after his "*Aurengzebe*," he quitted his long-loved mistress, Rhyme, twenty years after his successful experiment, though not completely, for he continued writing these heroic plays even after they were parodied in the "*Rehearsal*" of Buckingham. This burlesque of the heroic drama was staged out in the King's Theatre after his *Conquest of Granda* had appeared and been staged in 1670. The importance of this event in Dryden's life is none-the-less considerable although it is doubtful if the "*Rehearsal*" at all killed the heroic plays of Dryden.

What then about the position of Dryden as a dramatist? Few critics have, indeed, been found to say a good word for his comedies. "His stridiest champion, Scott, dismisses them as "heavy". Hazlitt, a defender of the Restoration comedy in general, finds little in them but "ribaldry and extravagance" and I have lately seen them spoken of with a shudder as "*horrible*". The tragedies have fared better, but not much better and thus the remarkable spectacle is presented of a general condemnation,

varied only by the faintest praise, of the work to which an admitted master of English devoted, almost exclusively, twenty years of the flower of his manhood.....Dryden's plays are far inferior as plays to his satires and his fables as poems."—(Saintsbury)

(C) Criticism

Dryden's prose work is intimately connected with that of his dramatic performances through his *Prefaces* in which he elaborated a style suitable for everyday use. His prose is free from two defects *viz.*, inordinate length of sentences, indulgence in parenthetical quotations, borrowed arguments, classicisms and conceits. His writings are simple, clear, graceful, straight-forward—qualities necessary for the formation of a workman—like prose style in English. He proved himself a master of prose without much practice.

Dryden applied himself in prose to examine the workshop of literature in essays which are modelled on those of Corneille. Of these essays the earliest ones are *The Essay on Dramatic Poesy* (1668) and the *Preface to the Fables* (1700). These are all written in the easy manner of creating an informal atmosphere, taking the reader into confidence and of allowing him to enter into the development of an argument. Until 1660 one can hardly maintain that England had ever developed a prose style suited for average purposes of daily life. For this, she is indebted to Dryden. In his case the immediate stimulus to his efforts at prose composition was the interest he felt in dramatic criticism. He was the greatest authority in literary criticism in which he educated his age.

Dryden stuck to the main tenets of "neo-classicism" which bloomed earlier in France. According to these tenets (a) reason rather than imagination should be allowed to dominate artistic creation ; (b) Poets should primarily confine themselves to men in society drawing their materials.

from the court and city life. (c) They should study classical models, apply principles of imitating Nature, and classical writers and present their subjects impersonally. (d) They should aim at technical perfection rather than the development of the emotional aspect of men and things (which later became the creed of Romanticists); (e) There must not be any mingling of 'kinds' like tragedy and comedy. (f) The function of poetry is to please and instruct (didacticism).

The Essay on Dramatic Poesy gives us a first striking illustration of Dryden's prose style. It is undoubtedly the best critical treatise in English. It occupies a cardinal position in English literary history. It is a model of new prose—a manifesto of 'heroic plays' and an exposition of divine views as to different kinds of drama, ancient and modern, the propriety of rhyme in tragedy and an expression of judicious and penetrating appreciation of the works of the great dramatists.

Although Dryden could not rise above the spirit of the age, he cannot be denied the position of its greatest literary critic. His 'partial orthodoxy' could not totally free his mind from the prejudices of his age. None-the less he was able to influence the next generation of writers. Surely, the extravagance and absolute lack of restraint of the later Elizabethans needed some bonds. 'The *strait waist-coat* was almost necessary, even after the fine madness, much more after the madness not so fine, of mid-seventeenth century verse, and in a less degree of prose. "It was left to Dryden to supply the felt need." The critical reading without theory or with theory postponed, of masses of different literatures, and the formation and expression of genuine judgment as to what the critic liked and disliked in them, not what he thought he *ought to like and dislike*—this was wanted and *what nobody had yet done, Dryden did it.*"—(Saintsbury).

CHAPTER III

THE SATIRICAL BACKGROUND

1. What is Satire ?

Satire is the employment of sarcasm, irony or keenness of wit in ridiculing prevailing vices, abuses, follies of any kind in an individual or social group. Irony is saying one thing when one really means just the opposite (*e. g.*, when I say, "Well, you are a *clever* fellow indeed !", I really mean that you are really an *incompetent fool*). Sarcasm is saying exactly what we mean by saying it cunningly *i. e.*, in such a manner as to excite ridicule or contempt. (*e. g.*, Swift's sarcastic saying, 'We Christians have just enough religion to mak us hate but not hate enough to make us love one another').

By 'satire' we also understand a specific *form* of composition in verse or prose designed to ridicule a particular person or class or group of persons. But, as satire is understood now it is not so much the *form* as the spirit which is the dominant note in literature today as ever before. "The satiric spirit may appear in prose as well as in verse in manifold forms." Satire is thus best defined as follows, "It is the expression, in adequate terms, of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly provided that *humour* is directly recognizable and that the utterance is invested with literary form."—(Garnett). But in certain cases the castigator of vice may satire without any humorous intention what so ever. In Dryden's satire there is a kind of *good-humoured scorn* without any sense of triumph over the adversary, mixed up with it, as opposed

to Shadwell's, which is, more often than not, almost incredibly scurrilous libel. With Dryden the satirist "is no more an enemy to the offender than the physician to the patient; when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease; because according to his conception, the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction and his moral reformation"—(*A Historical Sketch of the Development of English Satire (up to Pope)*).

2. The Satirical background with special reference to Mac Flecknoe.

Satire began with the old Greek dramatists. Of them the famous Greek comic poets, Archilochus and Aristophanes whose comedies are of great historical value for their caricatures of the leading personalities of the time and their comments on current affairs, furnish much matter for mockery of the follies and foibles of human nature. But it was left to a host of Latin writers to give "the mocking note, that peculiar tang which brings it into line with modern satire. We may regard Lucilius as the first to nurture the satirical muse; he is "the founder of mocking style" and to him Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius owe much of their satirical treatment of man and manners."

English satire was born in the 12th century, first in Latin verse, lamenting the vices of the age. Its allegorical and didactic spirit is characteristic, though its general purpose is satirical. Nigel Wirekar brought out his '*Speculum Stultorum*' (or Fool's Looking Glass) towards the end of the century. Chaucer, in the 14th century in his famous '*Nun's Priest's Tale*' (in '*Canterbury Tales*') gave Nigel an honoured place where the Fox tells Chanticleer that he has 'read in daun Burnel the Asse' how a cock in revenge for a blow upon the leg had caused a priest's son to lose a benefice. These Latin satires followed what is called the "classical tradition" or "Gollardic Latin verses," which had for its chief aim the exposure of abuses into the church.

The earliest vernacular satire was poor in substance and form. It ridiculed the monks. During the disastrous reign of Edward II, a "long poem on the times" condemned not only the church but the upper and middle classes in turn for oppression of the poor. In the reign of Edward III, William Langland's *Piers Plouman* raised satire to a height never attained before in England. Throughout the poem there is the moral earnestness of the preacher and the reformers. There is pure poetic beauty in it. It is in the form of a dream—a common device adopted from Dante onwards. We next come to Chaucer whose "*Canterbury Tales*" mostly satirise the church. As we read them through the fundamental difference between Langland and Chaucer at once becomes apparent. Langland is indignant, unsparing and uncompromising while Chaucer is always genial, tolerant and helpful. In Chaucer, the prevailing spirit is not satirical but humorous. While *humour* is almost invariable an ingredient in satire only when it is combined with the spirit of *criticism*, with the desire to teach or ridicule, does it become satire. Now the very breadth of Chaucer's humanity, his almost universal tolerance, limits its satire.

In the 15th century some of the minor poems of the Scottish poet John Lydgate (1370 ? —1451 ?) are satirical. William Dunbar (1465 ? —1530 ?) was most probably the author of an admirable satiric tale, which can be said to have equalled Chaucer himself in his handling of the 5-foot iambic line. Alexander Barclay (1475 ?—1552) satirises all kinds of fools in his "*The Ship of Fools*". Sir Thomas More's (1478—1535) '*Utopia*' is a satire on the actual condition of England. He had a biting pen, inspite of his kindliness of disposition. The sanitary regulations of his ideal commonwealth (Utopia) are an indirect criticism of the dirt, filth and squalor of London.

During the period of the Reformation satires were directed against the Romish church organisation. Sir David Lyndsay (1490—1555) in his *Satyre of Thrie Estates* made

a comprehensive criticism of Scotland of the day, both temporal and spiritual.

In the sixteenth century we see the beginning of the evolution of *Satiric Verse* culminating in Dryden and Pope in the satirical verses (sonnets), in Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503 ?—1542). He was admittedly one of those rare satirists, who, while censuring and denouncing vice, can convey the sense of a warm heart and a winning personality. In two respects, he stands in sharp contrast to his contemporaries viz., (1) the model upon which he moulded himself and (2) the metre which he adopted as the vehicle of his satire. Wyall used the Italian *terza rima* as the vehicle of his satire. Though a careful student of Chaucer, he did not adopt the admirable 5—beat iambic couplet which Chaucer had already used to good purpose in his satire as in other things.

After Wyatt came George Gascoigne (1525 ?—1577) who, in his *The Steel Glass*, used blank verse. Before him John Skelton (1460 ?—1529) had used the octosyllabic metre in his satire on the court of Henry VII. Satirists were still groping for the right form and the distinction of finding the best so far tried was reserved for Edmund Spenser (1552 ?—1599) who looked upon politics and social life with the eye of the satirist in the *Shepherd's Calendor* and *Proso Popia*. This latter belongs to the class of beash-fables of which the greatest exemplar is the tale of Reynard, the Fox. Spenser rediscovered the 5—beat iambic couplet and to him belongs the credit of establishing the metre of *Classical English Satire*, for the heroic couplet became and remained for two centuries the generally accepted measure for satire in verse. He revived also the beash-allegory.

After a century we find Dryden and Pope complete masters of the art of writing heroic couplets, highly polished, flawlessly correct and yet well adapted to purposes of satire. Other satirical writers of the Elizabethan period were Thomas Hodge (1558 ?—1625), Joseph Hall (1574—

1650), George Wither (1588—1667) and others. The Elizabethan period saw the birth of English prose satire in the satirical pamphlets and literature of Overbury, Dekkar, Earle, Ben Jonson and others. This was followed by somewhat sustained satire in prose during the period when the controversy between Cavalier and Roundhead came to a head.

Milton figured among the *Post-Restoration* prose satirists. Thomas Harman anticipated the character-sketch in the early 17th century, which became a favourite vehicle for satire. Thomas Dekkar (1570 ?—1641 ?) began his career as a satirist with *The Bachelor's Banquet*, which is a satire on woman and *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606), a satirical study of the London of the 17th century, like Charles Dickens, who did the same kind of work for London of the 18th century.

The whole conception of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* is satirical. The very concept of 'humour' promises satire. "A quality harmless or even landable in its just proportion and just relation to other qualities, becomes a weakness or worse when it dominates the whole man. The miser, the prodigal, the voluptuary, the zealot—may each in turn be good for satire where the dominant quality overtops ; while any of the qualities, indicated by these names may be so combined with other qualities as to make a portrait which is not satirical.

Let us take an example from Shakespeare to illustrate the standpoints of the two artists—Shakespeare and Jonson. "Shakespeare made Shylock miserly but he made him also at the same time a lover of his own race and his own religion, treasuring the memory of his dead wife, more faithful to the duty of father to daughter than was Jessica to that of duty of daughter to father, justly resenting the treatment he had received at the hands of Christians with a resentment strong enough to conquer his love of money. Though in this character the love of money is inordinate, for too many colours are on the pallet for the

portrait to be a satire." But it is not so in Jonson. His very names of characters proclaim the difference between and suggest the satirical purpose.

This vein of satire runs through most of Jonson's comedies. Jonson's work has something of the coarseness, as well as the massive strength of his physical frame but any way he remains a great master of English satirical comedy. If satire could show "the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure" Ben Jonson would hold the place of Shakespeare. *Therein lies the weakness of satire.* Every form of literature is valued ultimately in proportion to the truth it embodies. *Satire is always a relatively low form of literature, because it embodies a relatively small element of truth.*

The age of James I and his successor saw *character-writers*, with a thread of satire running through viz., Cleveland, Brome, Cowley, and above all, Samuel Butler (1612—80). Until the appearance of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, there appeared no satire that could rival Butler's *Hudibras*, his *Magnum opus*. On his own ground—that of satire in the grotesque vein—written in doggeral verse, Butler is supreme in English. Its main theme is the quarrel between the Crown and Parliament. He was admittedly the last and greatest of English satirists who shared the mediaeval spirit.

Even before Dryden, the *heroic couplet* was becoming more and more the accepted measure for satire. Shadwell's *The Medal of John Bayes* is memorable for the terrible caytigation it brought upon its author at the hand of Dryden. Oldham's *A Satire against Mankind* illustrates his great but perverted ability. His *Satire upon the Jesuits* (1611) was Juvenalian in violence and intensity. In his elegiac lines to the memory of Dryden, he proclaims his kinship to his younger contemporary.

"The gentle art of making enemies" is dangerous, and satirists were perhaps even less prosperous than other

writers in that period. Oldham died young, poor and unhappy. Dryden's own fortune fell in the evening of his life. "How wretched is the fate of those who write!", says Dryden in the prologue and epilogue to Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*. But whether Dryden's choice of satire as his vehicle was prudent or not, there can be no question that it was consonant with his literary genius. From the first, the admirable fitness of the man to the form and the form to the man, was evident.

Dryden (1631—1700) practised the formal satire rather late in his literary career. Earlier in his plays, prologues and epilogues he had used *incidental satires*. Before *Absalom and Achitophel* he was a practised hand at satire. He was personally attacked by Butler and Buckingham in *The Rehearsal* for swindling the style of his heroic play. At last, he thought it was worth his while to take up the challenge, which he did in a series viz., (1) *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681); (2) *The Medal* (1682) and (3) *Mac Flecknoe* (1682).

In all his satires Dryden showed that it was possible to write satiric verse without being either inflated or harsh and to combine smoothness of verse, lucidity of style and urbanity of manner, which makes Dryden's satire so strikingly original. The great merit of these satires is their superb gallery of portraits. Pope, in his masterly portrait of Atticus, rose to the same level; but Pope had Dryden to work upon and in Dryden there is a vein of humour which unfortunately Pope did not possess. "The secret of Dryden's success in his consummate mastery of style, his instinct for the apt phrase and the right word and, above all, his power to condense without using his pellucid clearness". Not the least admirable aspect of the art of Dryden is the variety he contrives to impart. *Absalom and Achitophel* is, indeed, a masterpiece of political satire but in *Mac Flecknoe* Dryden breaks fresh ground viz., literary satire. It is not known what led Dryden to fix upon the

obscure Irish writer Richard Flecknoe as the reigning monarch of the Empire of Dullness. Pope borrowed the idea in his *Dunciad*. Nothing but intelligence is necessary to make *Mac Flecknoe* a source of the keenest enjoyment. "Though it is questionably the most severe of personal satires, Dryden sank the greater part of his rancour in the humour of the conception, and the modern reader enjoys the fun without thinking much of its application to an individual. He laughs in pure amusement and only with an effort realises what it meant to the subject of the satire. The development is masterly from the very opening in which the aged monarch is represented pondering—

"Which of all his sons was fit
To reign and make immortal war with wit."

down to the closing speech, in which he enjoins the supreme dullard to 'trush nature, do not labour to be dull' and to select as most suitable for his gifts "same peaceful province in Acrostic land." In *Mac Flecknoe* we have good-humoured contempt instead of Shadwellian virulence. There is no more striking example of the humanising influence which humour exercises upon wit than *Mac Flecknoe* for the two qualities are mingled in this satire while the character of Og in "*Absalom and Achitophel, part II*" is destitute of humour. "The allegorical accompaniments of Shadwell befit the character of his kingdom. His brows are graced by thick fogs instead of glories and lambent dullness played around his face." His oath is 'never to have peace with wit nor truce with sense.' Poppies are spread over his temples and his reign is inaugurated with the omen of 'twelve reverend owls' instead of the vultures, which presaged the rule of Romulus, Finally,—

"The siri then shock the honours of his head,
And from this brows damps of oblivion shed
Full on the filial dulness."

The work of Dryden set the standard for generations the course of English satire. After its masterly handling of

these satires, there could be no doubt as to the fitness of the heroic couplet as the vehicle of consummate sketches of characters set an example which could not fail to be useful as long as political controversy endured.

(Adapted from H. Walker "*Eng. Satires and Satirists*")

3. Satire as a Literary Form

Aim and kinds:—Nature of Satire and its Future.

From the earliest classical times up till now a satire is a literary form which has for its object to give artistic expression either in a spirit of good-humoured amusement or righteous indignation evoked by follies or foibles or vices of a particular individual or group with a view to moral reformation. Humour, irony or sarcasm ironically worded, combined with a spirit of criticism, are essential ingredients of a satire. "Without humour satire is invective or scurrilous abuse and without literary form, satire degenerates into clownish jeering."

As referred to above, Archilochus of Poros (648 B. C.) was celebrated for his satirical iambic verses and proverbial for bitterness. Aristophanes, the Athenian comic poet, indulged in caricatures of the leading figures of the time in his comedies. But it was reserved for Lucilius to conceive and give tangible shape to satire as a distinct literary form. This was taken up and further elaborated by Horace, the Roman poet, according to whom folly rather than wickedness should be the object of satire which should be directed against avarice, bores, legacy-hunting etc. In his "*Satires*" Persius, the Roman satirist and the author of six satires, inculcated the stoic moral doctrine. Juvenal, the great Roman satiric poet, depicted contemporary society and denounced its vices in his sixteen satires. These three Roman satirists distinguish between 3 kinds of satire viz "The epicurean which laughs at mankind.....the stoical, which indignantly lashes mankind.....and the cynical which hates and despises mankind."

Coming down to modern times, we may consider satire under two broad heads viz (a) the *personal satire* and, (b) the *general satire*, the former, as its name implies, is directed against individuals and the latter against a whole community e. g. (a) *Mac Flecknoe*, *The Dunciad*, *English Bard and Scotch Reviewers*, *The New Republic* etc. and (b) *Piers Plouman*, *Guliver's Travels*, *Erewhon*, *Don Juan* etc.

4. The Nature of Satire

Comedy deals with the same sort of data as satire but, although it has a satiric vein, its aim is mainly amusement or entertainment. Satire holds up to vice or folly or person as guilty of it, because it falls short of the standard in which the satirist subscribes. This attitude of the modern satirist is best explained by its modern exponent, Shaw : "After all the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil good—humouredly, and whose laughter destroys the fool instead of encouraging him." (*The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Page 186)

The satirist is nearly always a man who is abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is. Much of the world's satire is the result of a powerful and even righteous indignation and is didactic in their objective. Here the distinction between the two forms of literary art viz, comedy and satire, is fundamental. Where the comedian's object is to amuse us by presenting before us delightful patterns of character, the satirist expresses folly through ridicule or sarcasm and persuades us to believe whatever seems good to him.

The satirist has a responsibility to truth and justice, although satire is not always enlisted in the cause of truth and virtue. Of the satirist becomes involved in party strife (as in the case of the political satirist Dryden) we must expect his vision of the truth to become blurred or distorted. Otherwise, the effectiveness of a satire in reforming

morals and manners is lost. But in the large majority of cases it is seen that satire can only present one aspect of the truth.

If it is a *personal* satire, it can only present one side of him. In such a case the satirist is like an advocate pleading a cause and to secure our agreement he is prepared to ignore much of the evidence relevant to our understanding of the victim's character and exaggerate the rest—"The satirist proceeds characteristically by drastic simplification, by ruthlessly narrowing the area of vision, by leaving out of account the greater part of what must be taken into consideration if we are to realise the totality of a situation or a character" (Sutherland). It will be fatal to the satire if the reader should reflect that much might be said on both sides. So it is part of the satirist's art to conceal from us the other side of the truth so that he may "*obtain an absolute dominion over the minds of the spectator's* by throwing dust in our eyes, by ferocinating us with the verisimilitude of the presentation of his side of the character of his victim and, above all, by so delighting us with his wit that we never pause to question his argument. This is *Dryden's art*, as much as of Shaw where genius lay in "*intellectual slum clearance.*"

In all cases of *Personal Satires*, the problem is how to expose the person satirised so as to convince the reader that he is really contemptible and is not being lampooned out of mere spite or for purely reasons of party politics and also how to put the victim to ashame into some kind of reformation or at least to check him in his career of wickedness or scurrility.

5. The Future of Satire

And what of the future of satire? Within recent years signs of an increased interest in this kind of writing are discernible, although it may be said that on account of its

limitations viz, its *destructive* character its *partial presentation of truth*, a good deal of the old Romantic Prejudice against satire still persists to this day. No one hated satire more than Wordsworth did. "If the present age is not unsympathetic to intellectual slum-clearance ascribed to Bernard Shaw, the feeling that the satirist is somehow negative, uncreative and irresponsible, is still there."

Yet present indications suggest that today we need him more than ever in these days of mass-communication, mass hysteria, stupidities and vulgarities of a mass culture and propaganda. There is great need today of works like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which are not *personal* satires like those of Dryden and Pope but *general* ones directed either against humanity at large or a particular segment of the human race. "If the twentieth century satirist cannot save us, he can at least encourage us to put up a tough fight over a just cause and not to give up without a struggle ; for he can, and does, let in a current of fresh air which fills our lungs and keeps our blood in circulation." It is yet capable of extraordinary triumphs of art as in the ages of Dryden and Pope ; although the social *milieu* may not be the same but really very different today.

6. The Satirical Spirit of the Age

In the early years of the 17th century the emotional fervour and exuberance of the earlier Romanticism of the Elizabethan period started degenerating into extravagance. This dawn of fresh interests was noticeable even in Bacon and Milton, who gave more and more attention to civic and political life. This change of outlook in men's mind and over the spirit of English literature was noticeable in the later poems of Cowley, Denham and Waller till after the Restoration. The full significance of the change was realised in—a new note in literature with the advent of Dryden—the spokesman of the age. Psychologically, this

new spirit involved the substitution of the critical for the imaginative spirit as a reaction from Romanticism. The Restoration brought the influence of France into special contact with English life and letters. "Such a change is inevitable when literature is made the vehicle of attacking the political life of the day. The new spirit is, above all, critical and analytic, not creative and sympathetic; it brings the intellect rather than the poetic imagination into play."

The great influences of the time united to make the Restoration an age of satire. Already the Civil War and civil strife during the Protectorate regime had known violent polemics. With the Restoration there was a reaction against Puritan austerity and discipline. When men's minds were freed from the chains, literature, freed from inhibitions, started satirising the age-old conventions and false religious dogmas. Whigs and Tories engaged themselves in a kind of paper war. With the establishment of monarchy there broke out an insurrection of instincts repressed under the Puritan regime. This revolt against austerity was also accompanied by a reaction against hypocrisy. French influences had also much to do with the inauguration of the great age of classical satire in English literature. Political rivalry, conflicts of social life, party spirit and even personal jealousies reflected themselves in the satirical literature of the period. Most of the satires of the age were either political or personal in character. Before the advent of Dryden most of the minor writers of the early part of the seventeenth century cultivated the satiric art. They had already hit upon and partly developed a suitable vehicle of satire in *heroic couplet*. It remained for Dryden now to perfect it not only for his political and personal satires but also for "heroic drama." Throughout the eighteenth century the heroic couplet, as perfected by Pope, remained a standard measure not only for his satires but also for other forms of poetry. Other events of time served satirists *e. g.* Titus Oates and Popish plot supplied fuel to

the satire of religion while the proposal to bar the Duke of York from succession stirred all the wits of the time to try their hands *e. g.* Buckingham, Rochester and Dorset among the nobles; Shadwell, D'Urfey, Olway, Oldham and settle among the humbler commands. The exacerbation of feeling which was the inevitable legacy of civil or party strife, imparted the satiric spirit. All these circumstances of the time were favourable to a great development of satire. There now grew up a distinct class of "*satirical writers*" mainly recruited from the nobility and the middle class intellectual *elite*. The old religious strife was substituted by political antagonism between the Whigs and Tories. Dedication of poems, satires etc to men of eminence in society in order to seek patronage, was another incentive to the development of the satiric spirit in the age of Dryden.

7. Dryden as a satirist

It is mainly as a satirist—a satiric poet—that Dryden's fame chiefly rests—for the two characters *viz* satire in verse and poetry *i. e.* the satirist and the poet—can hardly be distinguished from each other. He was not a great poet—far from it but "if the poetical *differentia* consists in the power of making the common uncommon by the use of articulate language in metrical arrangement so as to excite indefinite suggestions of beauty, then he must be acknowledged a master." We must not forget also the fact that "the author of the tremendous satire of the political pieces is also the author of some exquisite lyrics scattered about the plays." In this section we shall consider the chief characteristics of Dryden *as a satiric poet*.

In the first place, the range and variety of his satires were enormous. He produced three kinds of satires—*political, personal* and *religious*, arising out of party politics, social conflict and political antagonism of the day. *Mac*

Flecknoe is a *personal* satire in that it is directed against a fellow poet of the time, Thomas Shadwell but it is also *general* in the sense that it can be applicable to poetasters of all ages and times. His *Absalom and Achitophel* is a political satire which had the overthrow of Shaftesbury as its main object. His *Medal* is in part an invective against Shaftesbury and also an argument as to the unfitness of republican institution in England. His *Religio Laici* is an argument in verse on the credibility of the Christian religion and the merits of the Anglican form of doctrine and church government. The *Hind and the Panther* is a difference of his religion with an admixture of satire on the opposite creed through the medium of a beast fable. This didactic poem develops into a disputation between the Hind (Dryden's new church) and the Panther (his old church) enlivened by occasional satirical touches and couched in the most accomplished eloquence. The supremacy of Dryden lies in his poetical expression in all these satires. He could not rise superior to the faults of the age consequent on flagrant corruption in church, state and society. It was his misfortune that there was little that was really noble and inspiring in his subject matter but few will dispute that in transmuted them with the magic of poetry with the limitations of his subject matter by his manner of treatment, clothing the satiric with the majestic, elevating the trivial and raising the particular into the region of the universal. He has shown that, like Burns and Byron, a strain of pure poetry can be blended with satire resulting in "something not perhaps satirically more effective but certainly more charming than satire undiluted and unmixed." Like Burns Dryden was able to some extent at least to weave in "with the satire such poetic beauty as no satirist had ever mingled with it before and as only Byron combined with it afterwards." He showed that it was possible to write satiric verse without being either inflated or harsh. His native gifts and his extensive practice in play-writing had made his use of the heroic couplet as natural a vehicle as possible

with a varied cadence and subtly disposal music which invariably frees his verses from the charge of monotony and tameness. The rhymes in Dryden's satires thus became the bearer of a sound-pattern and the satiric barb at the same time.

Secondly, the superiority of the satiric art of Dryden will be evident from the fact that, unlike satirists of the day, he never lost his temper nor did he ever rave, rant, declaim and denounce with the air of an inspired prophet. His manner towards his victim is invariably "that of a cool and ill-humoured scorn." Most satirists committed the error of attacking types or else individuals too definitely marked as individually but Dryden's figures are always at once types and individuals." There was always a solid bed-rock of truth at the bottom of his satirical barbs and he never invented a charge to villify his adversary. A fine example of this is seen in *Mac Flecknoe* (ll. 163-164) where Dryden makes capital out of a substratum of truth underlying the fact that Shadwell had actually taken the help of Sir Charles Sedley in the matter of writing a prologue for him to prove his points that whatever was good and witty in Shadwell's "*Epsom Wells*" was due to the genius of the latter and not the former.

Thirdly, as has already been pointed out, Dryden's characters are individuals as well as types—not merely the men as they lived, moved and had their being in his age as individuals but had some of the permanent and essential attributes of the class they represented—i. e. the eternal verities which will remain true for all time. This is how Dryden the artist and Dryden the craftsman imparted to his wonderful character-sketches something of universality. Indeed, the method of presenting characters by exhibiting the universal in the particular while at the same time differentiating them by means of their easiest and most obvious distinctions and differences in clothes, habits, humours, follies and foibles etc. is quite an innovation in satirical writing which proves Dryden's original genius.

It is also to be noticed that his satire never degenerates into scurrilous abuse because while exposing their follies and foibles, he never forgets the good points of their character. "Dryden the artist reaped a reward from Dryden the man ; for this recognition of the good along with the bad gives his work the added grace of variety" (Hugh Walker). Likewise, Shakespeare the Elizabethan never forgot Shakespeare the artist in most of the monumental creations of his art as in Shylock, Prof. Charlton has remarked : "The one is Shylock as he meant to be—*Shylock the Ogre*—while the other is Shylock as he became through the artist's unconscious dramatic instinct—*Shylock the hero*." Moreover Dryden never descends into personal abuse by detailing. *Particular* misdoings and missayings (—most of which are unbelievable while others are inconclusive—) but on the contrary, confines himself in the adroitest way to vague *generalities*. His facts are rarely disputable." The famous passage in which Settle and Shadwell are yoked in a sentence of discriminating damnation is an admirable example of this. Dryden always maintained a kind of superior contempt never degenerating into mere railing or losing its superiority in petty spite.

Fourthly, though belonging strictly to the age of classical satire "his classicism is set off and enriched by a romanticism of the imagination."—He still retains the glow of romanticism of the Elizabethans. This is seen in his mock-heroic visions viz, where he institutes a comparison between Shadwell and Arion the famous Greek musician (ll. 43-44 in *Mac Flecknoe*) ;—again : right at the end, where he applies by a fine parody the Biblical episode of the flight of the prophet Elijah by a whirlwind into Heaven as his mantle fall on Elisha to Shadwell's succession to the throne of Dullness, vacated by his father Flecknoe (Vide ll. 216-217 *Mac Flecknoe*).

Fifthly, Dryden is superb in his gallery of satirical portraits which are really remarkable for what they do not

as what they do contain. He saw the superlative importance of moderation in detail as well as in tone, for the first time among satirists of his time. The secret of his art lies in careful selection of what is most effective. He is imbued with a fine sense of justice and fair play. He has much of it that he does not withhold positive praise—when he feels such praise is due. All this made Dryden's satire entirely novel.

Sixthly, Dryden had a singular faculty of verse argument never equalled except by Lucretious. His satirical portraits reveal a spirit of a true scholastic logician. The *Religio Laici* is a good piece of argument which is well sustained, "He had a touch of the scholastic in his mind and he took delight in the formulas of the schools and his literary criticism are frequently fair spinners of deductive reasoning." He was fertile in the art of illustration and concealing the weakness of an argument in the most convincing way by a happy smile or jest. There never perhaps was a satirist who less abused his power for his personal ends.

Seventhly, his vehicle was eminently suited to his means. Before Dryden versification of satire had been harsh rugged, uncouth (a kind of "rattle of the rhymes") and grotesque. With him it was the most natural vehicle of creative self-expression. He had acquired a wonderful command over it by exercising, developing and perfecting it after twenty years of play-writing. There are passages in his satire in which every couplet has not only the force but "the actual round of a slap in the face."

Lastly, in all his satires Dryden displays all the classical power of form and—"aided by a clear and well-thought-out plan his satires acquire an almost architectural quality of which English literature, leaving Milton aside, had offered few examples since the creations of Shakespeare."

(The quotations are from H. Walker and Saintsbury)

8. Dryden and Pope as Satirists

Just as Dryden crystallises the intellectual and emotional attitude of his age, so does Pope of his—the age of Queen Anne. Satire was legacy of the Restoration—of Dryden to the age of Pope, who followed in the footsteps of his master in satiric verses improved upon them on the model of the ancients and perfected the instrument—the heroic couplet. Pope's *The Dunciad*—a satire on Dullness—is just Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* broadened in scope from individual to class. The conception of Flecknoe as a monarch called to empire young and reigning during a long life 'through all the realms of Nonesense, absolute', is Dryden's own. Pope borrowed this idea in '*The Dunciad*.' Dr. Johnson thinks that Pope had impressed it by making it more extensive and more diversified in incidents; but to the modern reader *Mac Flecknoe* seems as nearly perfect in its kind as a poem can be. As we read *The Dunciad*, we find the stamp of Dryden on Pope's work-manship. When in 1712 Pope produced his earliest satire *The Rape of the Lock*, it was of a type for which there is no model in Dryden. Hazlitt called it the most exquisite specimen of filigree work.' So did Dr. Johnson—"the most airy, the ingenious, the most delightful of all Pope's compositions. It belongs to the class of mock-heroic. Technically *Mac Flecknoe* belongs to this class of mock-heroics too but in spirit it is simply a personal satire. Pope was drawing upon Boileau who was undoubtedly the immediate progenitor of *The Rape*. Like Dryden also, Pope is particularly skillful in mingling the great with the trivial—the particular with the universal. Like Dryden too Pope knew the value of variety and there are flashes of poetry in the midst of banter. Dryden's didactic poems e. g. *The Hind and the Panther* are quite unlike anything which came before him and have never been appropriated by anything that has come after them. Pope was by nature, a moralist and as a satirist he wanted to hit at the roots of the social wits, fashionable follies and pretences in order to raise the moral

tone of the pleasure-loving public. Pope is one of the greatest masters of poetic technique—an apostle of ‘correction’ of form which he thought more important than subject matter. The rigours of the artistic tyranny of form is evident in everything Pope published. “To him ‘correctness’ meant not only accuracy of expression, but also propriety of design and justice of thought and taste.” He perfected Dryden’s heroic couplet over which his command was also superb though he never exalted from over subject-matter. Just as Pope magnifies meanness in *The Dunciad*, so does Dryden magnify stupidity in *Mac Flecknoe*. Dryden was undoubtedly a pioneer clearing the ground for the greater master—craftsman, Pope. By the side of the intellectual gain, Dryden, Pope is, as it were, a pigmy but latter is beyond all doubt the superior craftsman. In Dryden there is a vein of humour and the after glow of the Renaissance in a fine stock of Romanticism while enlivens his satires, but in Pope there is none worth the name. Indeed, so great was Pope’s success in technique that Ruskin called him and Virgil two most accomplished artists. Skilful as Pope was in metre and technical perfection, he was incapable of achieving such enchantments as a Shelley, a Coleridge and a Keats could produce. Tennyson admired Pope’s single lines and couplets very much but after quoting one particular line (‘what dire events from amorous scause spring!’), he emphatically declared that he ‘would sooner die than write such a line!’ The range of Dryden was indeed enormous. “It is to the range of Pope as that of a forest to a shrubbery and in this case priority is everything; and the priority is on the side of Dryden. “There is nothing of the easy breadth and vigour of Dryden in Pope’s satires; on the other hand he excelled his precursor in exquisite finish and in detailed touches.” Using the Drydenian couplet he imparted to it a gossamer-like delicate of touch that more compensated for the lack of strength.

Hazlitt makes the following remark on the difference between Pope and Dryden as satirists—“The difference

between Pope's satirical portraits and Dryden's appears to be this in a good measure, that Dryden seems to grapple with the antagonists and to describe real persons : Pope seems to refine upon them in his own mind, and to make them out just as he pleases till they are not real characters but the mere drivelling effusions of his spleen and malice. Pope describes the thing, and then goes on describing his own descripton, till he loses himself in verbal description. Dryden refers to the subject often, takes fresh sittings of nature, and gives us new stroke of character as well as of his pencil."

9. The satiric art in Dryden's 'Mac Flecknoe' as compared with that of Pope's 'the Rape of the Lock.'

Both are recognised mainly as satirists in English literature and embodied the satiric spirit of the respective periods in which they lived adhere dominant figures. In the age of Dryden poetry and satire went hand in hand but in the age of Pope poetry became the handmaid of satire and imaged the conventional and contemporary life of the times.

In their two satires burlesqued the epic manner in order to make them appear more ludicrous. They were mock-heroic poems. The mock-heroic character is seen in the use of dignified and grand eloquent language while dealing with trivial incidents, noble images, classical allusions referring to great events in ancient Greek and Roman legends, imitation of old epic masters such as Homer, Virgil and latterly of Milton, humourous adaptation of great scenes in their epics etc. All these are used in order to enhance the ludicrousness of the whole affair.

Mac Flecknoe is a purely personal satiric mock-heroic poem while the *Rape of the Lock* is a more ambitious mock-heroic presentation of the frivolities of the age. Both are significant literary production within briefer compass than their more ambitious satiric didactic poems

(viz, Dryden's *Absalom*, the *Hind and the Panther*, *Religio Laici* as against Pope's 'Essay on Man', *The Dunciad*, the *Epistles* etc).

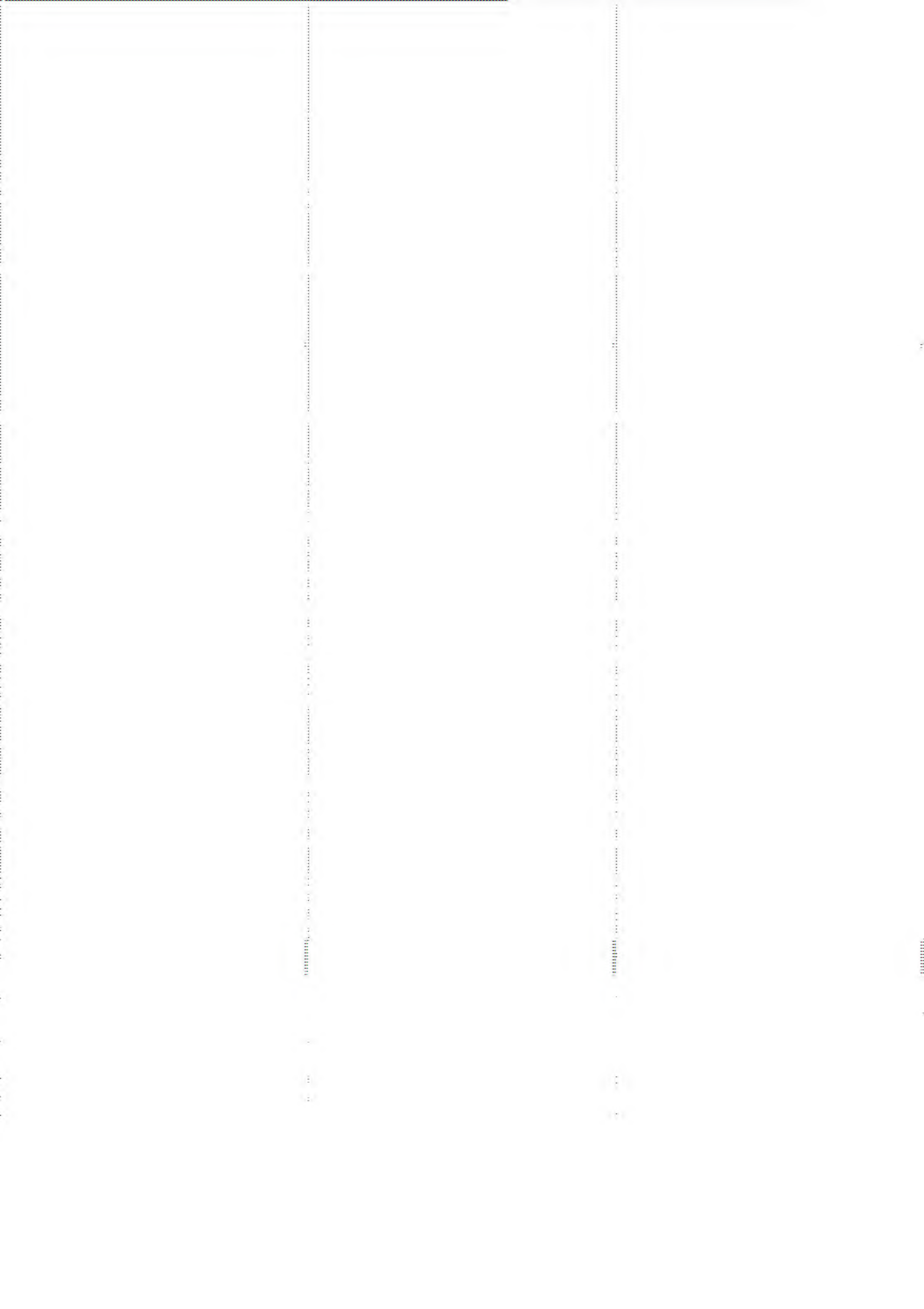
Both are important from the point of view of the satire art as well as productions of perennial interest for all ages and time. Both embody the typical satiric spirit of the age containing, as they do, criticism of two among the different aspects in which cultured humanity in all ages will always take interest viz, society and literature, for life in those times was above all, a social art.

The details of epic conventions used in *Mac Flecknoe* have been discussed in Chapter VIII section 3. The mock-heroic apparatus used in the 'Rape' is as follows : (a) The altar raised by young gallants by piling ponderous volumes of worthless romances invites comparison with Flecknoe's throne made of his own worthless volumes cf. Agamemnon's throne in Homer and Satan's throne in the Pandemonium in Hell (b) Belinda's journey by boat to Hampton court is a mock-heroic counterpart of Arion's voyage from Cornith to Lesbos. (c) The translation of Belinda's hair into the sky in order to form a constellation can be compared to Elijah's pilgrimage into heaven as his mantle fell on Elisha to which a reference is made in regard to Flecknoe's comic disappearance.

The immediate aim of '*Mac Flecknoe*' is to satirise Shadwell while its other aim is to ridicule the efforts of literary aspirations without merit. The *Rape* is a satire on the follies and frivolities of fashionable society of the age of Pope.

While Dryden's satire limited to a single incident viz. Shadwell's coronation on the throne of Dullness, Pope paints on a broader canvass the high lights of which is the delightful machinery of the sylphs and gnomes, who take a hand in human affairs. The corresponding counterpart, of the latter is the flight of twelve reverend eagles and the divine of the mysterious trap door through which old

Flecknoe disappears from the scene as his mantle falls on his son. While there are exquisite flights of imagination, visions and purple patches of fine poetry in Dryden. There is perhaps no such redeeming feature in Pope but there is no dearth of extraordinary felicity of expression in his 'most exquisite specimen of filigree work'. There are scales of values in both the works ranging from epic sublimity and human pitiness. There is an exquisite sense of equivalence between thought and image in both. Both are typical examples of poets who are topical without being at the same time ephemeral. Both made superb use of their common instrument—the heroic couplet both worked on Homeric and Virginian back-grounds with wonderful artistic effect.



SPECIAL
INTRODUCTION
TO
MAC FLECKNOE

CHAPTER IV

TITLE

The name of the book as Dryden wrote it was "Mac Flecknoe or A Satire on the True Blue Protestant Poet, T. S." Mac Flecknoe *i. e.* Richard Flecknoe (d. 1678) is said to have been an Irish poet who printed privately several poems and prose works (For further details see Notes). 'True Blue' means an extreme Whig. 'T. S.' means Thomas Shadwell. 'Mac Flecknoe' means the son of Flecknoe.

Dryden had no particular enmity towards Flecknoe who had paid compliments to him. Dryden seized upon this Irish Roman Catholic priest not for satirising him but his intellectual son, Shadwell. Flecknoe was already a 'stock subject for allusive satire.' Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) a Restoration satirist had already lampooned Flecknoe in his satire entitled "Flecknoe an English Priest at Rome." Dryden himself in the dedication to "Limberham" (1678), had noticed "the natural connection between a bad poet and Flecknoe" The earl of Dorset in his satire on Edward Howard described Flecknoe in these terms—

"These...antipodes to common sense.
These fools to Flecknoe pry' thee tell me whence
Does all this mighty mass of dullness spring."

John Oldham (1653-83), another Restoration Satirist, in his imitation of Horace *Ars Poetica* classes him with other contemporary satirists, who "are damned to wrapping drugs and wares, and curs'd by all their broken stationers." "The essential conception of Flecknoe as a monarch called to empire young, and reigning during a long life' through all the realms of Nonsense absolute is Dryden's own. The happy application of it gives an admirable setting to the

satire on Shadwell" (*Hugh Walker*). It is thus clear that his part indeed is simply representative, and the actual satire is reserved for Shadwell. Flecknoe's name was chosen as his name had become "a synonym for a poetaster and dullard."

But does Flecknoe really deserve to be so called? Flecknoe was a prolific writer, rather a scribbler for upwards of half a century. His first poem is dated 1626. Since then he had gone on producing a number of poems, plays and prose pieces—

"Though it were in spite
Of Nature and his stars to write."

Of his five dreams, only one was staged and even that one was damned. His epigrams and miscellaneous poems as a rule, are dull and tonic, but his prose 'Enigmatical characters, are not without merit. He was however the author of one really beautiful copy of verses, which ought in justice to him, to be quoted—

"Still-born Silence ! thou that art
Flood gate of the deeper heart.
Offspring of a heavenly kind.
Frost O' the mouth, and than O' the mind.
Secrecy's confident, and he
Who makes religion mystery.
Admiration speaking'st tongue.
Leave, thy desert shades among.
Reverend hermit's hallow'd cells,
Where retir'd devotion dwells,
With thy enthusiasms come.
Seize our tongues and strike us dumb."

(quoted by J. C. C.)

Vide Chap. VII for a fuller discussion of this question.

CHAPTER V

MAC FLECKNOE

- (a) The political Background,
- (b) Occasion from or circumstances of the composition of Mac Flecknoe, (mediate and immediate) and
- (c) Justification for the satire.

Dryden and Shadwell had indeed been good friends up till the time of the split up of the nation into two hostile camps—the Whigs and the Tories. The Whigs were led by the chancellor the earl of Shaftesbury who brought in before parliament the Exclusion Bill in 1679 with a view to excluding the *Roman Catholic*, Duke of York, (James II) from succeeding to the throne of his brother. The Whigs wanted to have the *Protestant* Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of Charles II as successor to his father, Charles II. The nation's mind was much exercised over this question. Dryden went over to the Tories and Shadwell to the Whigs. For the first eighteen years of Charles II's rule the nation did not seem to be much interested in political questions. Dryden, too, had not become interested in either political or religious questions. He had perhaps never been either a very fervent roundhead or Royalist. But in 1668 he was appointed poet Laureate and Historiographer to the King. This appointment made by an object of envy in several quarters. Buckingham, Butler and others brought out a burlesque, the rehearsal (1671) to ridicule Dryden's use of the heroic couplet in his dramas. The central figure of this farce was a silly and conceited dramatist named Bayes, who

resembled Dryden in every particular, including his voice, dress, snuff-taking, gestures and favourite oaths. It was staged in the very theatre which had been ringing with the sonorous couplets of Dryden's *Siege of Granada*. In a few weeks the whole of London was being convulsed with laughter at the expense of Dryden. He did not choose to give an immediate reply but inwardly burned for revenge. In the meantime three things induced Dryden to take an active interest in Politics viz, the Popish plot, the misgovernment of Charles and the machinations of Shaftesbury. Tradition lies it that he was more or less directly encouraged by Charles to write one or two poems which in a few months made him the first satirist of Europe.

In November, 1681, there appeared *Abraham and Achitophel* which under the transparent disguise of a narrative, bitterly attacked the factious policy of the chancellor the Earl of Shaftesbury and his Whig adherents. It was published a week before the Grand Jury threw out the Bill against Shaftesbury against whom a charge of high treason had pending. The success of *Absalom and Achitophel* was immediate but its main object viz. the overthrow of Shaftesbury by influencing the Grand Jury, was not accomplished, though it finally won for Charles the victory over the Exclusionists. But a certain triumph was temporarily gained by the friends and admirers of that turbulent political leader, Shaftesbury, by the failure of the prosecution against him. The Whig adherents of Shaftesbury now struck a medal to commemorate the occasion. Dryden and his Tory friends felt very uneasy at their defeat. So in March 1682, Dryden followed up his first great satire with another *The Medal : A Satire against Sedition*.

The Medal ridiculed the triumph of the Whigs. It called forth many scurrilous satires from the Tories but the most virulent satire was Shadwell's *the Medal of John Bayes*. The malignity of Snadwell's particular satire combined with his previous contemptuous references to Dryden viz (1) the burlesque '*the rehearsal*' of Buckingham (in

which Shadwell too was believed to have a hand) (2) An adverse criticism of Dryden's rhyming plays in the epilogue to Shadwell's *virtuoso* ; (3) In the *Lancashire Witches* Shadwell had criticised the Tory party and its poetic champion (Dryden) now caused Dryden to write a special satire on this literary sinner above by lampooning him in *Mac Flecknoe* (1682). The most severe of all personal satire in English except perhaps *The Vision of Judgment*.

After the publication of *Mac Flecknoe* the two—Dryden and Shadwell loved “in a perpetual reciprocity of malvolence.” Dryden again attacked Shadwell in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* with greater acrimony than before in the character of ‘Og’, a tun ‘round as a globe and liquor’d every chink’ against which readers are warned to stop their noses. The description contains one of the most loathsomely coarse expressions to which Dryden ever sank. This was followed by Dryden’s ‘*Religio Laici*’ (1687) which is in part satirical and which winds up with a characteristic but not ill-humoured fling at the unhappy Shadwell.

What then, was the immediate occasion for the composition of *Mac Flecknoe*. It is usually supposed that the scurrility of *The Medal of John Bayes* presumably written by Shadwell is such that it can be effectively replied to by a special personal satire like that of ‘*Mac Flecknoe*’. Let us go into this claim in somewhat greater detail, *The ‘Medal of John Bayes’* was published in May, 1682, but there being no advertisements of *Mac Flecknoe* in 1682, Malone, the biographer of Dryden, guessed that the latter was published presumably in October on the basis of an entry by Narcissus Lutterell indicating perhaps the date of purchase of a copy by him on October 4, 1682. So supposing, *Mac Flecknoe* was published in October, 1682, it is impossible that Dryden wrote another satire in collaboration with Nahim Tate on November 10, 1682 almost about the same time. Besides, there is no internal evidence

in *Mac Flecknoe* to show that Dryden was replying to any specific charge against him in the *Medal of John Bayes*, whose association with Shadwell as a collaborator has not also been established beyond any doubt. There is no reference to Shadwell's collaboration in prefaces, epilogues and dedications subsequently made by Dryden. In the face of the above facts the immediate occasion for the composition of *Mac Flecknoe* is open to speculation. This question is discussed in the next section.

It may be noted that, before the political turmoil which led to the publication of '*Absalom and Achitophel*' in November 1861 Dryden and Shadwell were good friends. This is established by the following friendly exchanges : (1) Dryden wrote a somewhat warm appreciation of Shadwell's genius in an Epilogue to the latter's *Volunteers* (2) Dryden wrote a prologue to Shadwell's drama, *A True Widow* (3) Both worked together in preparing Dryden's critical comments on Settle's *Empress of Morocco*.

Was the attack by Dryden deserve by Shadwell ?

We may say he is *a man more sinned against than sinning* i.e. punished more than his deservings. "Shadwell is as a comic poet greatly superior to Dryden. He is anything but dull ; he has what Dryden has not, rich vein of humour, coarse indeed, but genuine—much real dramatic power both in vivid portraiture and in the presentation of incident. His *Epsan Wells* and his *Squire of Alsatia* give us singularly vivid pictures of the social life of those two times. But for the rest he was fair game for the satirist. His habits were sensual and dissolute ; he was frequently half-minded with wine or opium ; he had a foul tongue and a foul pen ; and his absurd affection of posing as a second Ben Jonson, partly on the strength of his gross and unwieldy person and partly because of the analogy not altogether fanciful, between his genius and Ben's made him

the laughing stock of all who knew him." (J. C. C.) Prof. Saintsbury, however, says : "It is absolutely true that Shadwell wrote worse than even Settle and was in some respects a duller man, than any person of equal talent placed among English men of letters. There could not possibly be a more complete justification of Mac Flecknoe than the victim's complaint that he had been represented as an Irishman, though Dryden knew perfectly well that he had only once been in Ireland, and that was but for a few hours."

CHAPTER VI

THE QUESTION OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF MAC FLECKNOE

'Mac Flecknoe' was published anonymously in October, 1682. It is this which has given rise to speculations about the possibility of its authorship not by Dryden but by John Oldham (1653-83) on the following ground stated by Mr. Mark Van Doren (Editor)—

(1) The first edition of Mac Flecknoe was a piratical one because not much reliance could really be placed on the publisher (D. Green) who was a liar no less than a pirate and that the letter associated Dryden's name with it stating that the work was written by the author of Absalom and Achitophel because of increased sale of the book in the name of a popular writer (like Dryden).

(2) It was extremely unlikely for Dryden to conceive so much dislike for Shadwell after their close collaboration (see Note above).

(3) No author's name was assigned to Tonson's Miscellany in reference to Mac Flecknoe, although it was specifically mentioned therein that the 'Medal' was written by the author of Absalom and Achitophel.

(4) Dryden denied authorship when taxed by Shadwell but claimed it only after the latter's death on December 6, 1692.

(5) A late 17th century manuscript volume in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, containing most of John Oldham's works written in one hand, assigns five pages of Mac Flecknoe a satire *Anno* 1678. This has given support to the theory that most probably Oldham composed Mac Flecknoe in 1678 on the strength of some internal evidences.

i. e. passages from Oldham's known works virtually the same as those of Mac Flecknoe. Cf. line 53 of the latter with Oldham's Imitation of Horace Book I satire IX Per Contra. The manuscript in question might as well be Dryden's as Oldham's and we cannot decide the question of authorship so lightly and so slender an evidence. Oldham was admittedly a poor third rate satirist who can by no stretch of the imagination be conceived as the author of monumental satire Mac Flecknoe. There are many passages in the satire that could only have been written by the master craftsman, Dryden. Dryden never seriously denied authorship to Shadwell who took his disavowal too seriously. A simple appeal to the ear will convince any careful and experienced reader of Dryden's satiric verse that here is matter twice happier than Oldham's best rhymes. The rhymes in the former's satire are both the bases of sound pattern and the bearers of the satiric barb. No form but the couplet, enlivened with alliterations functionally varied pauses and word music could serve his motif and purpose so well.

The motif of Mac Flecknoe is to attack Shadwell's pretention not only to have improved upon Ben Jonson's comedy of 'humour' (in which a 'humour' is a personification of some individual passion or propensity) but also to have evolved and invented new humours for each play. No one except Dryden, the protagonist of wit, could have parodied the very words in Shadwell's dedication to the virtuoso and epilogue to the Humorists in order to expose the utter hollowness of his claim by turning Shadwell's own definition of humour against him in his inimitable style (see notes on // 185-186). We, therefore, conclude that Mac Flecknoe could not have been written by anybody else than Dryden.

CHAPTER VII

THE BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- (1) Life of Shadwell (2) Dryden's portraiture in the satire and its justification (3) Other persons satirised (4) Question of Justification in their case.

(1) Life of Shadwell.

Thomas Shadwell (1642-92), dramatist and poet was born at Weeting, Norfolk in 1642. He was educated at Bury St. Edmunds, Caius College, Cambridge and he then entered the middle temple. He was about 10 years Dryden's junior. He started producing dramatic pieces almost every year from 1668.

In speech often strong and picturesque he ranges from cheerful force to coarse verisimilitude. His *Epsom Wells* (1673) and *Bury Fair* (1689) give interesting pictures of contemporary manners and country pleasers and his prosaic but vigorous mind plants the reader in Restoration life more faithfully than does the wit and intrigue comedy of Dryden, Etherege and Congreve. Some of his dramas do give valuable pictures of the life of the times. "Shadwell was a comic poet of mean power, and but for the lavish indecency would well deserve to be read. He was certainly a better play-wright than his satirist Dryden." (Hales). His squire of *Alsatia* (1688) is a lively play providing a vivid evocation of London's underworld. His *True Widow* (1678) has some amazing satire.

Relations with Dryden.

In a manner Shadwell and Dryden were at first friends. They had joined Crowne in the task of writing down. *The Empress of Morocco*. It does not appear that Dryden had

ever given Shadwell any direct cause of offence. But Shadwell was understandably jealous of Dryden's acknowledged position as leader of the English drama. He was a sincere Whig and Protestant while Dryden was a Tory and a Roman Catholic. He took more than one occasion of sneering at Dryden especially at his critical prefaces. Political and professional rivalry drove the two into opposite camps for literary war in which Shadwell was worsted by the superior satirist, Dryden.

Shadwell and Jonson.

His *Comedies of Manners* modelled on Jonson (e. g. *Epsom Wells*, *Virtuoso* etc.) are by no means unimportant for the social history of the time. Like Jonson he aimed at presenting humours on the stage and evolved some more of this type. His picture of contemporary manners all in the tradition of Jonson. If his high Jonsonian ideal remained only an inspiration at least, his admiration for Jonson led him to explore different strata of social classes which his contemporaries ignored. In his preface to the sullen love he made the following remark on Jonson. "I think all dramatic poets ought to imitate him." Like Jonson he was a drunkard and had a corpulent body.

Estimate.

Shadwell's plays enjoyed a fine vogue as witty talker as well as an amusing writer. His merits as a dramatist lie less in his wit than in his local colour in his pictures and portraits of contemporary manners. His better plays are at least as worth reading as the lesser plays of his great contemporaries. He is not so dull as he is represented to be. He is the best 'humorist' of his age in the old sense of a 'caricaturist', owing debts to Moliere and to Jonson. (Adapted from Compton-Rickett, Walker, Saintsbury)

(2) Dryden's Portraiture of Shadwell in the satire and its justification :

The points made out in Dryden's portrait are as follows : "His goodly fabric fills the eye." He has got "a mountain belly" "a tun of man in thy large bulk is writ." He is a drunkard. At the time of his coronation the aged king (Flecknoe) places in his left hand a huge mug of wine. His physical grossness is symbolical of his intellectual stupidity. He is a passed master in the stupid art of tautology. The versification of his opera (psyche) is execrable. All his plays assert his right to the throne of Dullness. His dramas are as stupid as the characters are absurd. His aping of the inimitable 'humours' of the great comic genius is ridiculous. His attempts to pass off actual scenes bodily lifted from the plays the more successful dramatists like Sedley, Etherege, Ben Jonson etc. have failed miserably. His manner of villifying the poetic art which he does not understand, is, indeed, ridiculous. He shares indeed the big bulky figure of Ben Jonson but he has not a grain of the latter's wit. His claim to the invention of new humours, for each of his comedies often the manner of Ben Jonson is preposterous his comedies serve to expose the only 'humour' of whichous. It only the 'humour' of dullness in dramatic composition. His comedies are quite as ineffective as his tragedies. His satirical barbs never bite, although his heart is full of poison. Instead of continuing to write plays he should certainly be better advised to specialise in acrostics.

The personal satire on Shadwell in the framework of a mock-heroic epic is indeed, an artistic triumph. But the portrait itself is by no means fair. Admittedly Shadwell is not such a dullard as he is represented to be on the above lines. There is *none the less of solid substratum of truth underlying nearly every statement of Dryden*, although there is an admixture of half truths, grotesque exaggerations some distortion of facts and of merits into demerits and some deliberate omission of good points in his character.

Another redeeming feature of the satire is that his manner towards his subject is that of a cool and not ill-humoured scorn" (Saintsbury) as against Shadwellian scurrility and virulence. There is thus "no more striking example of the humanising influence which humour exercises upon wit for the two qualities are mingled in Mac Flecknoe while the companion picture of 'Og' (Shadwell) in *Absalom and Achitophel* (Part II) is totally destitute of humour."

That there is an element of truth behind the invectives of Dryden will be evident from the following quotation from Prof. Saintsbury.

"His manners are admitted to have been coarse and brutal, his conversation unclean, his appearance uninviting, nor was his literary personality safer from attack. He had taken Ben Jonson for his model, and any reader of his comedies must admit that he had a happy knack of detecting or imaging the oddities which after Ben Jonson's example he called 'humours'...But whether it was owing to haste as Rochester pretended or as Dryden would have it, to certain intellectual incapacities, there can be no doubt that nobody made less use of his faculties than Shadwell. His work is always disgraceful as writing ; he seems to have been totally destitute of any critical faculty and he mixed up what is really funny with the dullest and most wearisome folly and ribaldry.

To give a specific instance of a subtraction of truth (however thin it may be) in Dryden's charges, let us turn to lines 163--164, where Dryden bases his generalization viz that Shadwell cannot write at all without some foreign aid, on the single fact that Sir Charles Sedley did write the prologue to his drama (Epsom Well's) and also made some corrections and improvements. (See Notes) yet inspite of everything we cannot but sympathizing with the victim a fellow poet, though a political rival fit the exaggeration, ludicrous absurdity of the portraiture and intentional

distortion of facts and at the end cannot help exclaiming Shadwell is more sinned against than sinning'.

(3) Dryden's portrait of other persons satirised and

(4) The justification of these Satires.

Richard Flecknoe (—d 1678 ?), a voluminous Irish priest and poetaster, one of the meanest versifiers of the age and author of plays which are admittedly beneath contempt was perhaps not unjustly lampooned by Dryden here. On the whole Flecknoe was all that he is represented to be in Dryden's satire. It is also a fact that contemporary opinion had actually pronounced him to be an insufferable dullard and that he was a stock-subject for satire. (See Notes for biographical details)

In lines 29-30 Dryden speaks disparagingly of Thomas Heywood (1575-1650); a prolific Elizabethan dramatist who wrote a large number of dull plays totally devoid of any literary merit and of Jones Shirley (1594-1666) another voluminous author of some forty dramas, while describing Shadwell as the last great prophet of tautology. This is obviously unjust. Charles Lamb spoke of Heywood as a "prose Shakespeare." Heywood's chief strength lay in the domestic drama. Shirley did belong to the period of Elizabethan decadence in drama. But he is still admired for his comedies of manners, romantic comedies, Lyrics and for the dramatic entertainment. (The contention of Ajax and Ulysses 1659) ending with the famous dirge viz. 'The glories of our blood...things'. His literary reputation was revived by Charles Lamb, who says of him in these terms: "He claims a place among the worthies of this period, not so much for any transcendent genius in himself, as that he was the last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common. A new language and quite a new turn of tragic and comic interest came in with the restoration".

The way to the throne of Dullness, along with the crown prince (Shadwell) was to pass, is described as being littered

with the scattered limbs of mangled poets such as Heywood, Shirley and Ogleby. Dryden is certainly unfair to the first two but he seems quite justified in regard to the third i. e. Ogleby (satirised by Pope as 'Ogleby the Great' in his *Dunciad*) who is prolific writer without any literary merit. John Ogleby (1600-76) was a dancing master and poetaster. While yet a boy Pope did admire his translation of *Odyssey* later lampooned him in his *Dunciad* in these terms. 'Here swells the shelf with Ogleby the great.'

Dryden's rather contemptuous reference to Thomas Dekker (1570 ?-1632) as a 'mere city poet' whose chief duty was to arrange for the organised recreation and entertainment of common people is anything but fair. Thomas Dekker (1570-1632) was an old Elizabethan comic dramatist whose geniality is manifest in everything he wrote. In his "The seven Deadly Sins of London" he speaks in a satiric vein of the reins and entertainments of common people of a city of which he had made a special and profound study, and extols the suburbs as the centre of London's gallantry. His *The Shoemaker's Holiday* gives realistic pictures of amusements of common people. Charles Lamb said of him that Dekker had poetry enough for anything.

'Mac Flecknoe' contains appreciative references to other contemporary poets and dramatists such as Ben Jonson, Fletcher, Sir George Etherege and Sir Charles Sedley.

CHAPTER VIII

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF MAC FLECKNOE

1. The Scheme and Execution

'Mac Flecknoe' is built in a mock heroic epical framework with all the solemnity and grandeur of the Homeric style. Its scheme is highly ingenious. It is the best expression of various forces which served to diffuse the satiric spirit in the age of Dryden viz, contemporary society in a state of flux, manners of fashionable and polite society, political faction, French and classical literary influence, new awakening of interest in criticism and a passion for correctness. It is also light in weight topically allusive and its venous is concentrated within a small compass. In it Dryden is, at bottom, making another attempt at what he has so long desired after having been fed up with 20 years of dramatic experience, and wished to write *a poetical work on the epic line*.

In his ready-made frame Dryden displays all the classical power of form, Aided by a clear and well thought-out plan, the framework of his construction acquires an almost *architectural quality*. It has all the features of a mock-heroic fantasy. "The development is masterly from opening in which the aged monarch of Dullness is represented in the epic manner as pondering—

"Which of at his sons was fit.

To reign, and made immortal war with wit".

down to the closing speech, in which he enjoins his heir—the supreme dullard (Shadwell) "to trust nature, do not labour to be dull", and to select as most suitable for his gifts "some peaceful province in Acrostic land." Alone

among all his other sons Shadwell is marked out for the succession by supremacy of endowment both intellectual and physical. He alone is the perfect image of his father.

The rest to some faint meaning make pretence. But Shadwell never deviates into sense. And the body is worthy of the mind—

“His goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems designed for the thoughtless majesty.”

The allegorical accompaniments of Shadwell befit the character of his kingdom. His brows are graced by thick fogs instead of glories, “and lambent dullness play’d around his face. His oath is ne’er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.” Poppies are spread over his temples; and his reign is inaugurated with the omen of twelve reverend owls instead of the vultures which presaged the rule of Romulus finally

“The sire then shock the honour’s of his head.
And from his brow damps of oblivion shed
Full on the filial dulness.”

Then follows Flecknoe’s prophecy of the great future of Shadwell. The main points of which are :—his bad versification; dull characterisation, bombastic style, his ridiculous claim to evolve a new theory of ‘humours,’ his plagiarism indecency, ineffective satire ect., for which he is recommended to give up literary and devote himself to anagrams and acrostics. The dramatic disappearance of Flecknoe through a trap-door as his mantle falls on his son in the manner of Elijah bequeathing him to Elisha, is very cleverly conceived.

(The quotation is from Walker)

2. Analytical Synopsis of the Satire

(A) Flecknoe’s Reflection on the choice of a suitable Successor ; (ll 1—12).

Flecknoe, a prince among poetasters, is anxious to choose a most suitable successor among his sons before the call of death comes to him.

(B) His choice of Shadwell on account of his many qualifications. (II 13—62)

Flecknoe decides to choose Shadwell as the most suitable successor to him worthy of himself in every way in view of his special claims.

(a) He is a perfect replace of his father, irremediably stupid, as he has not exhibited the faintest slimmerings of sense alone among his other sons.

(b) His huge bulk is designed by nature to be the receptacle of impenetrable intellectual darkness.

(c) Compared to him neither Flecknoe himself nor his writings were not dull enough, he being but a precursor to the greater dullard, (Shadwell).

(d) Flecknoe's poetical and musical performances pale into insignificance when compared to Shadwell's efforts to enlist court favour.

(e) As a bandmaster made havoc of his musical notes, for their stupid monotony and mechanical regularity, were not even equalled by the execrable versification of his own opera 'Psyche'

(C) The site of the coronation chosen in the disreputable quarters of London (II 63-86)

1—The Venue for the coronation was a wretched 'Nursery'—a training centre for actors and actresses, where only stupid dramas were the usual favourites.

2—The city poet Dekkar, had prophesied about the great wit who would wage perpetual war against sense, in his stupid dramas.

(D) The coronation of Shadwell (II 87-133)

1—Dullard came from far and near to attend the Coronation.

2—The way to the throne of Dullness was covered with mutilated works of wretched poetasters including those of the crown Prince Shadwell.

3—A guard of honour was formed by cheated book-sellers led by Herringham.

4—The throne was made of Flecknoe's own volumes.

5—The crown prince (Shadwell), seated on the right hand of Flecknoe, took the solemn oath of waging life long war against sense.

6—The old king performed the anointing ceremony. He held a mug of wine, (Instead of the ball) in his left hand and a dull drama of his in his right, as he sought inspiration for producing stupid dramas.

7—The crown prince's head was then crowned by a chaplet of Poppy leaves and flowers to induce more dullness and drowsiness into his brain.

8—This was immediately followed by a flight of twelve revered owls. Then amidst the deafening cheers of the crowd the old father stood up to bless his son and as he did so, damps of oblivion fell from his aged brow on the head of his son.

(E) Flecknoe's prophecy and benediction (ll 134-204)

Then the father invoked God's blessings on the son and visualised a bright future for him in a prophetic mood in these terms :—

1—Let his ignorance and impudence grow from more to more and let him produce far duller works than Flecknoe Love's Kingdom.

2—Let all his strivings and literary labour be futile not even bringing forth the proverbial mouse after the mountain of his vacant mind had been in labour.

3—Let his fols and fops only reveal the author's stupidity.

4—Let him not seek external inspiration and foreign aid and try to pass off others' writings as his own but

depend entirely on the powers of his brain so that every one of his characters may exhibit all his stupidity, and talk nonsense in a high bombastic style.

5—Since he has no affinity with Ben Jonson excepting his burly figure, he should be well advised to stop aping that great comic genius.

6—The very idea of evoking new type of comedy of humours some what on the lines of the great master is ridiculous. The only humour he is capable of exhibiting in his comedies, is the 'humour of dullness.'

7—Though physically formidable, he is intellectually very poor.

8—His tragedies amuse and his comedies produce a soporific effect. His satirical bards are, ineffective, though his heart is full of venom.

9—He would rather shine in the harmless exercise of making anagrams and acrostics.

(F) Flecknoe's sudden and dramatic disappearance puts an end to his vaticimation (II 205-211)

Just as Elijah went up to Heaven in a blaze of glory carried by a whirlwind and his mantle fell on Elisha, his son, so also Flecknoe suddenly went down the stage mantle (his coarse woolen drugget) was wafted upwards and fell upon his successor Shadwell, who was thus doubly endowed with dullness.

3. Critical Appreciation of Mac Flecknoe

'Mac Flecknoe' is a master piece among personal literary satires, if not the greatest of all English satires. It assured for Dryden a much more exalted literary position than ever before "with no second at any moderate distance." It is a highly entertaining lampoon on Shadwell, light in weight concentrated in its venom, devastating in its capacity to hit by means of its satirical barbs interspersed with momentary

flashes of imagination and charged with a power of vision after the epic manner. It may as well be called an epic "fragment". The mockery of Dryden is like the terrible play of an intellectual giant who so wields his satiric weapon with Olympian superiority and contempt that he is able to disarm his puny adversary. Stand on his bosom, thrusts it into his bosom with horrible glee, and while attempting to consign his rival to oblivion, really makes him immortal as the victim of his satiric barb. But for this great work, no one would have inquired about either Flecknoe or Shadwell except as literary curiosities. Mercilessly hard as Dryden hit his antagonists we must not really be the first to strike. First of all he had the mortifying of hearing all London rock with laughter at his expurse after he has lampooned by Buckingham Shadwell and others in the dramatic burlesque the Reherersal. The very theatre which was ringing with the sonorous heroic couplets of his sieze of Granada was now hoarse with contemptuous laughter over the ludicrous parodies of his favourite passages and effective scenes. There as soon as he brought out his political satire the Medal to ridicule the triumph of the Whigs, out came The Medal of John Bayes from the pen of Shadwell. This time Shadwell's libel was incredibly scurrilous and it was the malignity of this satire and its unmannerly violence that probably the immediate cause of Dryden's special satire on this literary sinner belonging to the same profession. "All trustworthy evidence concurs in praising his amiable and kindly disposition, his freedom from literary arrogance and his willingness to encourage and assist youthful aspirates in literature." In pronouncing our judgment on the literary work of a writer we must consider the social mileu. The spirit of the age—as affecting it to a certain extent at least. And what of the nature of the social world out of which it came? It must be admitted to have been a time of shameless courseness in language and manners of virulent and blood thirsty party spirit; of almost unparalleled self-seeking and political dishonesty; and of a flattering servility to which

in the same way, hardly any parallel can be found" while, therefore, Mac Flecknoe embodies the characteristic spirit and the unmistakable impress of the whole social world out of which it came, it also points to the future to Pope, who was his true successor in the line of satirical verse.

'Mac Flecknoe' is the most striking example of the mock heroic in English literature. In this also Dryden was passing on to his successor, Pope the torch of his inspiration in the satiric line in his *The Rape of the Lock* in which trivial incidents are invested with dignified language in a kind of burlesque of the epic manner of the writings of the immortal classics of old particularly of Homer, Virgil and laterly Milton. The epic conventions introduced into Mac Flecknoe are as follows: (1) the solemnity of the coronation ceremony, the throne itself built up of piles of huge volumes of worthless dramas of Flecknoe, the blessings of the father in high sounding phrases in epic style. (Cf.) (a) Homer's presentation of Agamemnon's throne; (b) Milton's description of the occupation of the presidential throne in the Pandemonium where all the fallen angels assemble in Hell etc.; (2) The parallelism of the two omens viz the twelve eagles of Romulus as against the twelve reverend owls of Shadwell; (3) the nonsensical performances of Shadwell as band-master sailing in a boat before the royal barge of king Charles in order to seek his favour as compared to his counter-part in the classical legend of the Greek Musician Arion's voyage from Coreinth to his island home at Lesbos; (4) Virgil's description of the exaltation of Aeneas and his son Ascanius, "Rome's other hope" compared with Flecknoe abdicating the throne of Dullness in favour of his spiritual son, Shadwell; (5) the translation of Elijah the prophet into heaven as his mantle falls on Elisha burlesqued in Flecknoe's comic disappearance through a trap door as his mantle fell on his son Shadwell. The scheme and execution of this mock heroic framework together with details have already been discussed in the previous sections of this

chapter. All these form parts of the critical appraisal of the burlesque.

Besides being a personal satire, it is also a criticism of the literary art of his adversary and contemporary writers, involving questions of partisan and literary interest. It also transcends the individual and particular in that the satire is equally applicable to all ambitious aspirants to literary fame without merit. The socio-political condition of the age was such that a great deal of what Dryden wrote had to be personal, partisan and of consequent ephemeral interest but Dryden the artist forgot Dryden the party man inducting universal elements. Had Dryden been a mere part pamphleteer, he could never won for himself a permanent position in English letters on account of this work.

Dryden knew that satire is poetry of a half spurious kind and a low form of literature which can only be of ephemeral interest to his own generation. Hence, to save his satire from being consigned to oblivion, he imported into it *universal element* by making his character studies at once *types as well as individuals*. He sank the greater part of his rancour in the humour of the conception, so as to enable the modern reader of 'Mac Flecknoe' enjoy the fun without thinking of the individual whose leg is pulled. The parallel with Pope in his 'Rape of the Lock' can be sustained throughout. Just as Pope magnifies meanness in his Dunciad so does Dryden magnify stupidity rising stage by stage from mockery to epic proportions. There is also an exquisite sense of equivalence between thought and image.

There is poetry in 'Mac Flecknoe' although of a relatively low kind, as all satire must be. This is noticeable in frequent flashes of imagination (a relic of Romanticism) and a power of vision in purple patches with which the whole satire is interspersed in epigrammatic in style brilliance. The supernatural machinery of the 'twelve revered owls' and the mysterious comic disappearance of Flecknoe are employed to heighten the ludicrous effect of the humorous burlesque.

The outstanding merit of 'Mac Flecknoe' lies in its underlying humour. Had Shadwell been an entirely imaginary character, we should have regarded him as a wonderful comic creation for Shadwell is basically a creature of the comic imagination (*I am Jack : Augustan satire*, page 52). Wit,—admittedly the most dreadful weapon in the armoury of a satirist—is here in plenty. Besides the good humoured raillery. Dryden's sereno contemplation of his victim, his amused detachment, his almost unconscious superiority are also its admirable features. Prof. Sutherland remarks in this connection : "What Pope said with a good deal less justification of the Duncid. The poem was not made for these authors, but these authors for the poem, is true of Dryden's mock heroic fantasy."

The great thing about the way Dryden works in the heroic idiom of his fantasy that the couplets convey to us a sense of make believe dignity and even grandeur and that it is only after second thought that we realise that what seemed to be praise is in fact denigration of the deadliest kind viz, that Shadwell is being torn into pieces. All this is effected by a comic transformation of rules. There is a kind of Miltonic grandeur about Flecknoe's opening speech—"The words themselves constantly create the comic ambivalence on which the whole of the speech depends." They create in us the illusion of heroic utterance in grimdiloquent phraseology. The similes employed are equally grandiose.

'Mac Flecknoe' was not only the first great mock-heroic poem but also the very bery among personal satires in English.

CHAPTER IX

THE HEROIC COUPLET AND DRYDEN'S USE OF IT

1. Historical Background upto 18th century

The heroic couplet means English heroic verse consisting of a line of 5 iambuses *i. e.* of five feet (iambic pentameters), with each foot consisting of two syllables accented on the second and rhyming in pairs *e. g.* aa, bb, cc, etc. A couplet, means a pair of verses belonging together especially when rhyming and of same length.

"Its life passed from the stage of infancy in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to an almost premature and state of accomplished growth at the close of the last named. It went through a serious fit of disease in the fifteenth. It was a familiar verse from Chaucer's time onwards. It was also used by the Elizabethans, though their preference for blankverse or more elaborate verse forms prevented it from being generally popular. It recovered magnificently during the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth and within this time, it practically completed the pioneer exploration referred to above. It was left to Spenser to rediscover it for use in all his purposes of poetry. To him belongs the credit of establishing the metre (the 5 beat iambic couplet) of classical English satire, for the heroic couplet became and remained for two centuries the generally accepted measure for satire. The example of this great poet was followed by other satirical writers now that the form had been discovered. After another century we find Dryden and Pope complete masters of the art of writing heroic couplets, highly polished, flawlessly correct and yet well adapted to the purposes of satire. Even before Dryden the heroic couplet was becoming

more and more the accepted measure for satire. Which was consonant with Dryden's genius, far from the very first the fitness of the man, was perceptible." In the seventh century the heroic conflict was regarded by Dryden and other as the true form for English heroic verse and most suitable for tragic heroic drama. Throughout the eighteenth century the conflict as perfected by Pope, was a standard measure for all forms of poetry. (vide History of satire—The satirical Background for details—Chap. III).

Before Dryden came a new school of good sense in poetry was springing up when the great Romantic school was practically over. This new school was led by four chiefs, viz., Waller, Denham, Cowley and Devenant. These four writers helped to develop the heroic couplet which is to be predestined common form of poetry for poems of length. The satiric poems in which the couplet had been mostly used were by accident or design couched in the roughest possible verse. The couplet could degenerate into rhythmic prose in clumsy hands.

(Adapted from Ward)

2. Dryden's use of the couplet

This was about time when Dryden came. All his efforts during the first poetic period before the dramatic period were within by Dryden in the heroic couplet. They were sufficient to show that a new poetical power had arisen in England. As yet he was yet to be satisfied that the couplet could also be used as an effective instrument of creative self expression for narrative poems of any length. There is unmistakable sign of the energy divine for which the author was to be famed and already there is an indication of the varied cadence and subtly disposed music which were in his hands to free the couplet from all charges of monotony, tameness and conceits soon he developed a mastery treatment of the form—of giving the phrase a turn so clear and so individual of weighing the verse with such dignity and at the

same time winging it with such lightly flying speech. Then Dryden began to make use of the couplet in his plays. It is certain that without such extensive practice in these plays the couplet would never have acquired the unique combination of ease and force—of regularity and variety and, above all, its cadence which it displays in his *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Mac Flecknoe*, *Religio Laici* and the *Hind and the Panther*.

Versification of English satire before Dryden had been harsh, rugged, uncouth (there was the inevitable rattle of the rhymes) and even grotesque in the writings of Marston, Butler, Cleveland and Marvell. With Dryden his nature gifts combined with his enormous practice during his dramatic period of twenty years had made the couplet as natural a vehicle to him for any form of discourse as blank verse. Dryden's form of discourse as blank verse. Dryden's form had a varied cadence. Besides, its strong antithesis and smart telling hit—its variety combined with his faculty of specious argument in verse, were never equalled except by Lucretius. "There are passages in Dryden's satires in which every couplet has not only the force—the rapidity of moment—the colour and variety of cadence, but the actual sound of a slap in the face. He made the couplet an exact, faithful; terse but thoroughly expensive, vehicle of thought through formal perfection of the poetic language. In Pope the standard of 'correctness' was pitched in a much higher key. He abandoned Dryden's irregularities—the triplete, alexandrines, variation of the pauses, free circulation of ideas etc. for Pope's objective was cold, intellectual brilliancy. But Pope could not forge and wield the Olympian thunderbolt of Dryden's couplet; even if he had been able to do so, he could not have changed it with the massive strength of Dryden's sense." The thin atmosphere of poetry that we find in Dryden, disappears altogether in Pope's satire for the rhymes in Dryden's verses perform a dual function viz., they are not only bearers of a sweet sound pattern but also of the mild satiric barb.

CHAPTER X

THE PLACE OF DRYDEN IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND GENIUS IN RELATION TO HIS AGE

The age of Dryden was as we have seen essentially an age of prose of 'pseudo-classicism' which made poetry of a spurious kind the product of intelligence. Such poetry was deficient in two of the three essential characteristics viz. imagination, emotion and music. That is why lyrics were very rare in this age. This tendency towards pseudo-classicism *i. e.* not the classicism with which we are familiar with the works of Greek and Latin masters but classicism of a sham and degenerate kind. Leanings towards this kind of classicism was further developed and became prominent in the age of Pope whose poems crystallise in a remarkable manner the intellectual attitudes of the age which was severely rational and prosaic in character.

The age of Dryden or rather the Restoration age was predominantly an age of satire when poetry went hand in hand with satire. We have seen how Samuel Butler (1612-1680) wrote the famous 'Hudibras'—his magnum opus which had for its main theme—the quarrel between the crown and parliament with which it is inextricably blended the quarrel between church and dissent. It was a product of the Cavalier spirit against Puritan domination. Satire first came as a reaction against puritan austerity. Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) a survivor of the Cromwellian regime, replied to Butler's satire in a much severer tone than anything Juvenal himself could have written. He was followed by John Oldham (1653-83) illustrated in his satire against the Jesuits his great but perverted ability. His satires upon the Jesuits was Juvenilian in violence and intensity. False spiritual dogmas also began to be denounced

by satire. Besides this other events of time suggested to almost all the writers of before Dryden to take to satirical writing *viz.* Titus Oates the Popish Plot the question of succession to the throne, political antagonism between the adherents of Whigs and Tories, headed by the two poets *viz.* Shadwell and Dryden. When Dryden took to satirical writing, he was already a mature genius. He practised the formal satire rather late in his literary career—the circumstances of his time were favourable to the development of the satiric spirit. The place of Butler was lying vacant. Dryden was the man to fill it up and very eminently did he fill it by his monumental works in the satiric time. He had a natural genius for this kind of writing. He had a logical and scholarlike mind. Until he was far advanced in middle life he had not interested himself in religious and political controversies. He never been a very fervent Roundhead nor a very fervent Royalist. It was when the whole nation seemed to have been split up over the question of the Exclusion Bill that he brought out his first great satire, *Absalom and Achitophel*, followed by two others *viz.* the *Medal* and *Mac Flecknoe*. Dryden possessed certain gifts which once for all determined his position as the greatest poet and craftsman of the age. Satire argument and exposition were his special gifts. He had already obtained a wonderful command over the couplet through his dramatic period. His faculty of spacious argument in verse was unique. His form had varied cadence. It was smooth as against the harsh, rugged and uncoath verses of his contemporaries. He could maintain an attitude of detachment and cool good humoured scorn. His satirical figures were always at once types and individuals. There was invariably some factual basis for his satires. He dealt with generalities rather than particulars which were much more difficult of disproof. His satires are also not destitute of humour and imagination. All these gifts gave Dryden representative character.

He was, indeed, the most conspicuous personality. There was no literary movement of importance in which by virtue of his individual eminence he did not assume the leadership. No one so represented his time and influenced it as a man of letters as Dryden. He was far in advance of his age too in every branch of literary work. His intellectual and artistic superiority to men of his time was also an admitted fact. The eighteen volumes of his works contain a faithful representation of the whole literary movement in England for the best part of half a century, and what is more, they contain the germs and indicate the direction of almost the whole literary movement for nearly a century more.

Dryden was not only the most conspicuous personality of his age but also the most significant precursor of the age of Pope *i. e.* the classical or Augustan age proper—When Romanticism was fast decaying Milton, its last survivor found himself eclipsed by a minor great of writers precursors whose defutatives were taken up by a greater successor such as Waller, Denham, Cowley and Davenant in whose works there was growing up a kind of good sense in poetry. Other dominant tendencies in Restoration literature because soon marked *viz.*, the tendency to realism, a general formalism which came from following rules, the development of a simpler and more direct prose style and the increasing use of the heroic couplet. These are among some of the main characteristics of Restoration literature which were exemplified in the work of one man *viz.*, John Dryden. It was Dryden who became the symbol of the ideals, aspirations, achievements, merits and defects of the age. It was he who gave a final shape and form to satirical literature which was speciality of the age. It was again Dryden who first laid the foundation of literary criticism.

He was admittedly the first English poet who lived mainly and wholly by his pen the first to discover and prove that a poet might play a part in the political life of his country which was an uncertain life, because there was

always the risk of backing the wrong horse. He lived in an age in which literature (poetry and prose) had to deal with social, political and religious subjects in a style reflecting the taste for brilliant but argumentative conversation. He embodied in his verse satiric spirit of the age was both officially and unofficially the Laureate of the Age. But did Dryden transcend his age? Did he speak for all ages and times, so that we can assign for him a place among the great poets of all ages?

Before we answer these questions in the six section let us take stock of his actual achievements here. Of his twenty eight plays, all of them with the possible exception of one perhaps viz., (*All for Love*) are no more than mere literary curiosities. Dramatic work was against the grain with Dryden. He took to play writing because it was the most fashionable and most lucrative of all literary occupations. As a dramatist he may be said to be of his own age and not for all times. His chief title to fame rests chiefly on his satires and prose works. Of his works only two *i. e.* his essay on Dramatic Poesy and Preface to the Fables are his chief contributions to critical literature in English. He cannot be denied the position of the greatest literary critic of the age but he could certainly not rise above the spirit of the age. Clarity, ease, vigour, variety and intelligibility are features of Dryden's prose. Since correctness and elegance became the ideals in literature, words and their usage had to be submitted to the same criteria. The greatness of Dryden in prose is partly that he so well unites the raciness of such writing with the new ideal of clarity and coherence. Dryden was admittedly the first to elaborate a prose style suitable for every day use.

As regards his poetry, we propose to discuss his claims in the next section and consider his over all contributions from a single consistent point of view. So far his satiric poetry or poetry in verse satire is concerned, we can agree with the opinion of Banamy Dobree. "Without Dryden, for better or for worse, eighteenth century poetry would

havh been very different from what it is to begin with, we may say, 'No Dryden, no Pope, with all that involves.'

3. General Estimate of Dryden as a Classical and Didactic Poet.

DRYDEN AS A POET

Did Dryden achieve anything in the way of poetry? Is satire poetry?

True poetry must have three essential characteristics imagination, emotion and music. A true poet must have imagination or vision or insight, for as he sees deeper than we do *e. g.* revealing the familiar unknown the inner meaning or mystery of common place things with a kind of sixth sense of his own. Poetry begins and ends in emotion, some deep feeling in the poet's heart which he expresses by his word music *i. e.*, words so arranged as to produce music with the help of rhythm. The poet must be a person who has the wonderful gift of enabling others to share his imaginative experience. This idea is beautifully expressed by Wordsworth:—

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

It is therefore, the transfigured life of the poet that is expressed in all great poetry. For what want of a satisfactory definition of poetry we may accept this 'Poetry is an emotional and metrical appeal to the understanding which awakens in us, in some form a consciousness of beauty.' If we apply these criteria to Dryden's poetry, we cannot but conclude with the Romantic poets that politics, religion, didacticism or translation of classics can hardly be the stuff out of which great poetry can be evolved; that satire is a relatively low form of literature out of which real poetry

can not come and that even if some flashes of imagination or lyricism can be inducted into satire, it can only be called pseudo poetry of a second rate character. Dryden was little acquainted with simple and elemental passions. His mind was analytical. Emotional apprehension of facts was not in his line. The Romantic poets demanded a charm, a mystery, and a transporting power which they could not find in Dryden. But do we agree with the thesis *viz.*, that no poetry can come out of such ephemeral subjects as politics and didacticism of the age? Prof. Saintsbury has given the answer." There are, as it seems to me, many mansions in poetry and the great poets live apart in them. What constitutes a great poet is supremacy in his own line of poetical expression. We must be satisfied that the poet has his faculty of expression well at command, not merely that it sometimes visits him in a casual manner, and we must know that he can apply it in a sufficient number of different ways. But when we see that he can under these conditions exhibit pretty constantly the poetical differentia, the power of making the common uncommon by the use of articulate language in metrical arrangement so as to excite indefinite suggestions of beauty, then he must be acknowledged a master.

Dryden's songs testify to a very high lyrical quality. This is quite surprising for a poet whose greatest triumphs were won in the fields of satire and of argumentative verse. These songs constitute Dryden's chief title to a high rank as a composer of strictly lyrical poetry; and there are indeed few things which better illustrate the range of his genius than these exquisite snatches.

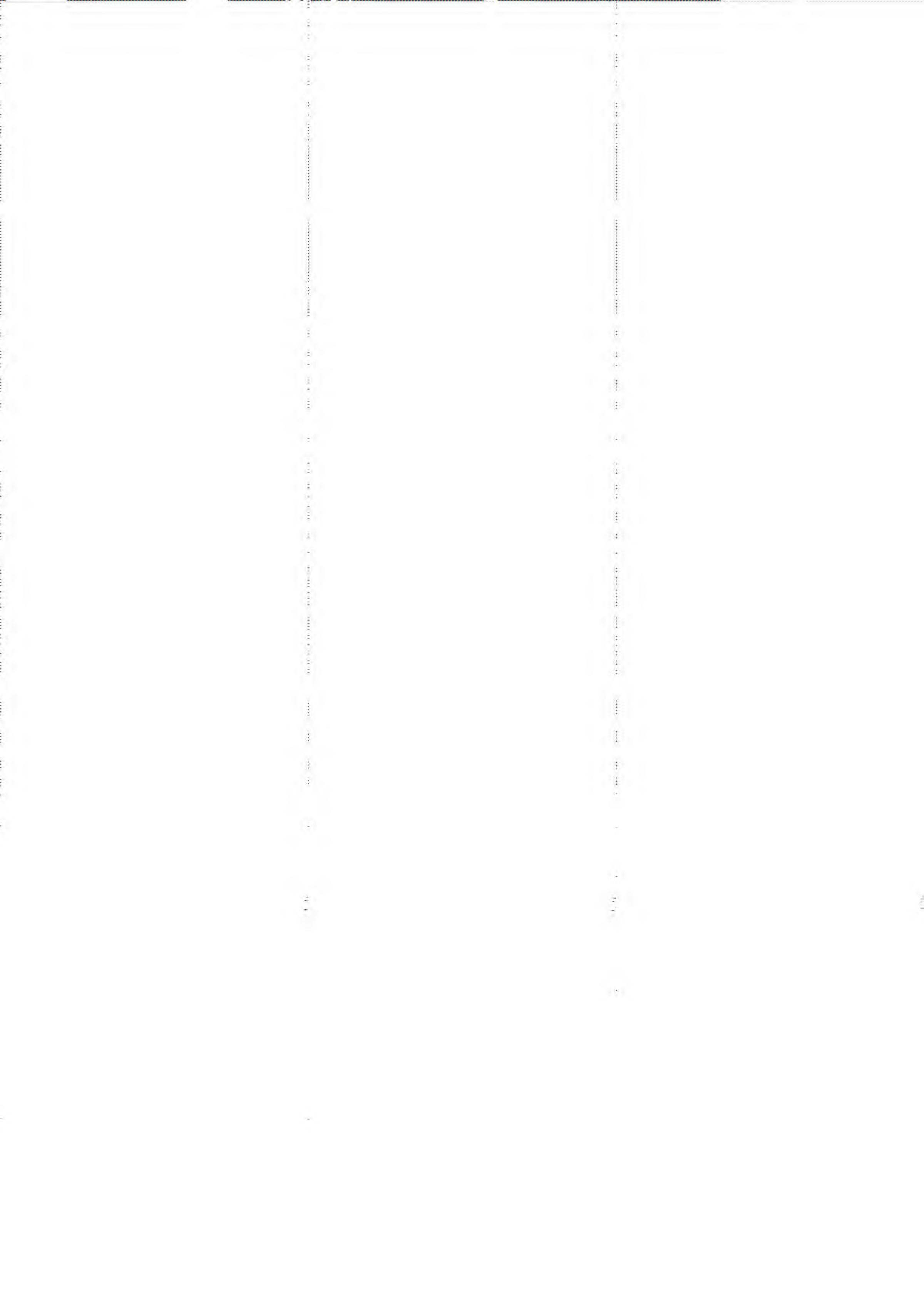
The rhymes in his satires are both bases of an exquisite sound pattern and the bearers of satiric missiles. His odes have got a high lyrical quality. His 'Alexander's Feast' is highly lyrical. He himself thought it the best of all his poetry. We all know that he had a remarkable faculty of self-critics. Even his satires are interspersed with flashes of imagination and exhibit a power of vision and beauty.

He was admittedly the greatest craftsman among English poets.

The two famous didactic poems of Dryden are *Religio Laici* and the *Hind and Panther*. He had a singular faculty of verse argument. He was not the first didactic poet in England. Sir John Davies was his forerunner and there were others also. But Dryden's didactic poems are quite unlike anything which came before them and have never been approached by anything that has come after him. He had a touch of the scholastic in his mind and he took a keen delight in the formulas of the schools. His literary criticisms show him to be a successful spinner of deductive reasoning in verse. In the *Hind and Panther* the argument is partly composed of narrative and satirical portraiture. But *Religio Laici* which is admittedly the best didactic in English, is not open to this charge. The question again arises, can didacticism form the staff of great poetry? Perhaps not, as Lowell had admirably put it. "Dryden is best upon a level table land.....a very high level, but still somewhere between the loftier peaks of inspiration and the plain of every day life." This is true perhaps of all Dryden's poetry.

"His peculiar gift is the faculty of treating any subject poetically, his ability to make the small into the great, the prosaic into the poetic, the trivial into the magnificent." It is unprofitable to discuss whether he was a greater poet than Shelley. In the house of poetry, which is a kind of mysterious colossal Gothic cathedral, full of soaring pinnacles, shadowy unexplored vistas and caverns, clustered over with spreading foliage and grinning sinister gargoyles. It is a many towered building of many mansions in each of which a great poet lives apart in his own. What constitutes a great poet is his supremacy in his own particular line of poetical expression. In this great house of poetry, Dryden had undoubtedly his own niche where he claims a place, perhaps a modest one in the second rank.

And what about Dryden the man and the poet of the Age of which he was the trust representative? An epitome of the man Dryden and his specific contributions is best expressed in the words of Bonamy Dobree: "his admirable craftsmanship; his ironic vision of the social enthusiasms of his century himself however no prey to disillusion, holding as he seemed to do that a new age really did mean new beginning, to which his own unfailing vigour might contribute. Copiousness, energy, vitality those are the key words for Dryden; not profundity, not subtlety, not exquisite delicacy? Nor except rarely by implication alone, deep conflict; but the energy of intellect flooring like sunlight over a wide landscape, the vitality of being inspiring a passion for his craft, there never abated. There is, then, in his poetry, none of the yearning of the Romantics, the reachings out after the impalpable in the attempt to grasp the inapprehensible; his vivid, actual imagination plays around the actions and passions of men and women as they live out their lives, in soul as well as in body. He does not confront us with profound, searching sentiment making us face the innermost nature of our being; but he has a firm grasp over a wide field, handling at no despicable level the eternal religious issues, and the scientific development of his age."



MAC FLECKNOE
OR
**A SATIRE ON THE TRUE BLUE
PROTESTANT POET**

T. S.

MAC FLECKNOE

All human things are subject to decay
 And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.
 This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
 Was called to empire and had governed long,
 In prose and verse was owned without dispute
 Through all the realms of Nonsense absolute.
 This aged prince, now flourishing in peace
 And blest with issue of a large increase,
 Worn out with business, did at length debate
 To settle the succession of the state ;
 And pondering which of all his sons was fit
 To reign and wage immortal war with wit,
 Cried, "Tis resolved, for Nature pleads that he
 "Should only rule who most resembles me.
 "Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
 "Mature in dulness from his tender years ;
 "Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
 "Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
 "The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
 "But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
 "Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
 "Strike through and make a lucid interval ;
 "But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
 "His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
 "Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye
 "And seems designed for thoughtless majesty,

10

20

3. Emperor Augustus ruled for 44 years over the Roman empire as against Flecknoe's 50 years over the realm of Nonsense. 6. **absolute**—unrivalled. 7. **aged prince**—old Flecknoe. 8. **Large increase**—worthless poetasters by direct succession from Flecknoe. 10. **Succession**—as monarch in the realm of Nonsense. 12. **Immortal.....wit**—eternal crusade against sense. 18. **confirmed.....stupidity**—incorrigibly foolish. 24. **rising fogs**—mist obscuring the light of intelligence.

PARAPHRASE

All things that are human are mortal, and even the proudest monarchs and potentates of the world must respond to the call of Death. The poet Flecknoe realised the great truth that, although he had reigned for long as the undisputed monarch over the kingdom of dullness, writing stupid stuff in prose and verse like the Roman Emperor Augustus, he too must keep himself in readiness to obey the call of death, which must overtake him soon. So this aged Prince who had reigned as undisputed monarch of the realm of dullness, was now anxious to settle the question of successor to him from among his numerous progeny that band of younger poetasters, dull scribblers and worthless writers who hopped to take his place. Accordingly weighing in his mind the question as to which among his intellectual progeny of worthless writers was best fitted to carry on the work of fighting a relentless crusade against sense, and reason, he at length said. 'It is decided that, as urged by nature i. e. by virtue of innate or inherited disposition or character, it is in the fitness of things and is only proper that he should be succeeded by Shadwell because of all his intellectual progeny he has inherited in the fullest measure the paternal quality of dullness. Shadwell's special claim that fully justifies my choice rests on the following (1) he is without a peer in point of dullness and is a perfect replica of his father (2) his earliest writings betray confirmed stupidity (3) alone among this stupid progeny poetasters who may exhibit occasionally a slight glimmer of sense, Shadwell with his incorrigible stupidity has never been guilty of single line of sense in his writings. Indeed his intellectual darkness is unrelieved by the least trace of sense and reason. Like the fog enveloping darkening the day light, Shadwell's sense stupidity hinders all clear thinking (4) Nature has endowed him with a huge massive body purposely with a view to making his darty bulk to be the receptacle of his intellectual grossness.

"Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain
 "And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
 "Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
 "Thou last great prophet of tautology. 30
 "Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
 "Was sent before but to prepare the way,
 "And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came
 "To teach the nations in thy greater name.
 "My warbling lute, the lute I whilom strung,
 "When to King John of Portugal I sung,
 "Was but the prelude to that glorious day,
 "When thou on silver Thames didst cut thy way,
 "With well-timed oars before the royal barge,
 "Swelled with the pride of thy celestial charge, 40
 "And, big with hymn, commander of an host ;
 "The like was ne'er in Epsom blankets tost.
 "Methinks I see the new Arion sail,
 "The lute still trembling underneath thy nail.
 "At thy well-sharpened thumb from shore to shore
 "The treble squeaks for fear, the basses roar ;

27. **Monarch oaks**—oak trees of huge dimensions.

28. **Supinely**—indolently "with face upward" 30. **prophet**
 of tautology—high priest of foolish repetitions. 33. **Nor-**
wich drugget—coarse woollen garment of Norwich. 35.
Whilom—formerly. **The lute.....strong**—the poetry I once
 wrote. 42. a scene never depicted in one of your nonsensi-
 cal plays (Epsom Wells). 43. **New Arion**—a second Arion
 as famous as the ancient Greek Musician. 46. **Treble**—the
 shrillest note in music.

(5) Compared to him old Flecknoe himself dwindles into insignificance in point of dullness, like an oak tree exercising its sovereignty over smaller trees in a dull listless manner. The Elizabethan poet Heywood and the voluminous dramatist Shirley were but forerunners and archtypes of Shadwell who belongs to the same fraternity and who is the unrivalled master of the stupid art of foolish repetition of meaningless words and phrases. Flecknoe himself was sent down to the earth by God to prepare the proud for one greater than himself like John the Baptist. Though illustrious among dunces, he is however, prepared to resign the primacy in favour of his intellectual offspring, Shadwell. Like John the Baptist who used to be dressed in a raiment of camel's hair Flecknoe was clothed in coarse woollen garment of Norwich to prepare the ground for the appreciation by the people of works of greater stupidity. The poem that Flecknoe composed in the court of king John of Portugal while on a visit there on a formal occasion, served only as an introduction to the day of the greater triumph on a later day when Shadwell sailed in a pleasure-boat in front of the Royal barge of king Charles, at the head of a band of musicians and with his flattering poetry set to music, he sought to buy the favour of king, up with his proud position as bandmaster of a party of musicians, although he was totally unconscious of the fact that he all but made havoc of all musical notes by the mechanical rhythm and the dull monotony of the meter of his verse—a scene which had never been depicted in one of his sensical plays *viz.* "Epsom Wells." Then Flecknoe continued in the following strain: "It seems to me that Shadwell is a second Arion with only this difference that while the famous Greek poet sang his celestial songs to the dolphins. Shadwell made hellish music while sailing in his barge. Thus totally unconscious of the monstrous music Shadwell continued to sing playing on his lute with his sharp nails as if his tomb was a sword inflicting cruel cuts" on the musical notes which were echoed from shore

"Echoes from Pissing-alley Shadwell call,
 "And Shadwell they resound from Aston-hall.
 "About thy boat the little fishes throng,
 "As at the morning toast that floats along. 50
 "Sometimes, as prince of thy harmonious band,
 "Thou wieldst thy papers in thy threshing hand.
 "St. Andre's feet ne'er kept more equal time,
 "Not even the feet of thy own 'Psyche's rhyme :
 "Though they in number as in sense excel,
 "So just, so like tautology, they fell
 "That, pale with envy, Singleton forswore
 "The lute and sword which he in triumph bore,
 "And vowed he ne'er would act Villerius more."
 Here stopped the good old sire and wept for joy, 60
 In silent raptures of the hopeful boy.
 All arguments, but most his plays, persuade
 That for annointed dulness he was made.

57 Singleton—celebrated bandmaster of the king
 59 Villerius—a character D' Avenant's opera. 63
 Annointed dulness—kinship over the empire of dullness.

to shore. While a large number of fishes, loitered round about his boat, eager to make meal of the crumbs of bread thrown into the Thames from the king's breakfast table, though insensible to the music, unlike dolphins attracted by the strains of Arion's lyre. Sometimes, as the leader of the musicians Shadwell flourished the roll of manuscript in his large hand and moved it up and down to direct his band so clumsily as to invite comparison with a farmer threshing his corn with his flail. The monotonous regularity with which Shadwell moved his the manuscript brightly up and down, was such that it was not surpassed even by the regularity of the steps of the accomplished dancing master of the time or the feet of his own rhymed opera 'Psyche.' The verses in Psyche's rhyme were excellent in point of sense and music (spoken ironically) as the foolish repetition of words and phrases in Shadwell's dramatic and poetic efforts. Such was the mechanical regularity and monotony with which Shadwell moved the roll of his manuscript up and down while directing his band of musicians that the celebrated musician and actor (Singleton) swore that he would no more play the role of Villerius as Shadwell's 'Psyche' had thrown all other operas completely in the shade. Proud of the prodigy he had begotten father (Flecknoe) burst out into an explanation of parental rapture. His sons undisputed legitimate right to the throne of dullness could be established by whatever he had written—his plays in particular.

Close to the walls which fair Augusta bind,
 (The fair Augusta much to fears inclined,)
 An ancient fabric raised to inform the sight
 There stood of yore, and Barbican it hight ;
 A watch-tower once, but now, so fate ordains,
 Of all the pile an empty name remains.
 Near this a Nursery erects its head, 70
 Where queens are formed and future heroes bred,
 Where unfledged actors learn to laugh and cry,
 Where infant punks their tender voices try,
 And little Maximins the gods defy.
 Great Fletcher never treads in buskins here,
 Nor greater Jonson dares in socks appear ;
 But gentle Simkin just reception finds
 Amidst this monument of vanished minds ;
 Pure clinches the suburban muse affords 80
 And Panton waging harmless war with words.
 Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,
 Ambitiously designed his Shadwell's throne.
 For ancient Decker prophesied long since
 That in this pile should reign a mighty prince,
 Born for a scourge of wit and flail of sense,
 To whom true dulness should some "Psyches" owe,
 But worlds of "Misers" from his pen should flow ;
 "Humourists" and Hypocrites it should produce,
 Whole Raymond families and tribes of Bruce.

64 Fair Augusta—beautiful city of London named after Augustus (Charles II) **67 Light** called. **70 Pile**—building
71 Nursery—training place for would be actors. **74 Punks**
 —prostetants **74 Maximins**—a Roman tyrant (here would be tragic heroes). **75 Fletcher**—Elizabethan dramatist.
buskins—high heeled light shoes. **79 Suburban muse**—poor poets who are unable to live in London. **Pinton**—a famous punster. **85 a flail of sense**—a chastiser of good sense. **87 worlds of 'Misers'**—a host of dull dramas like 'The Miser'

In the infamous suburbs of London, near the old walls surrounding the city and by the side of a small watch tower, now crumbling to decay, called Barbicon, there stood a nursery where heroes and heroines were trained to play their parts. Such is the decree of Fate that the main structure at that place had disafflared and now survive only in the strict name. In that disreputable quarter there rise many brothels kept by women of ill fame, which were the scenes of licentious love and immoral pleasures. Of course neither the tragedies of the great Fletcher (a well-known Elizabethan dramatist), nor the great comedies of the still greater Johnson were taken up in that 'nursery' *i. e.* theatre for the training of boys and girls for the stage for rehearsals; but only wretched interludes (written by wretched poets, who were too poor to live in London proper) and dramas full of vile puns found a fitting welcome there, because the people of these parts who were men of depraved taste, incapable of appreciating anything better. The type of poet who found a ready reception there was the notorious punster Pinton who used words in their different senses with a view to making himself witty but in effect his punning was dull and quite harmless as it hurt none by his pointless jokes.

This nursery was chosen by Flecknoe as an ideal Place (which had already achieved a notoriety as the resort of dullness) fit for the coronation of his son, Shadwell, for the ancient dramatist, Thomas Dekker had prophesied long ago that there would reign a mighty prince whom nature had made an apostle of dullness and nonsense—one to whom absolute dullards should be indebted for the production of some nonsensical operas and stupid dramas like 'Psyche', The 'Miser,' the 'Humorists' in which a host of absurd characters like Raymond and Bruce would figure.

Now empress Fame had published the renown 90
 Of Shadwell's coronation through the town.
 Roused by report of fame, the nations meet
 From near Bunhill and distant Watling-street.
 No Persian carpets spread the imperial way,
 But scattered limbs of mangled poets lay ;
 Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby there lay,
 But loads of Shadwell almost choked the way.
 Bilked stationers for yeomen stood prepared
 And Herringman was captain of the guard.
 The hoary prince in majesty appeared, 100
 High on a throne of his own labours reared.
 At his right hand our young Ascanius sat,
 Rome's other hope and pillar of the state.
 His brows thick fogs instead of glories grace,
 And lambent dulness played around his face.
 As Hannibal did to the altars come;
 Sworn by his sire a mortal foe to Rome ;
 So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
 That he till death true dulness would maintain ;
 And, in his father's right and realm's defence, 110
 Ne'er to have peace with wit nor truce with sense.
 The king himself the sacred unction made,
 As king by office and as priest by trade.
 In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
 He placed a mighty mug of potent ale ;
 "Love's Kingdom" to his right he did convey,
 At once his sceptre and his rule of sway ;

90 Empress Fame—goddess of rumour. 98 Bilked—
 deceived 101 throne...reared—throne made up of his own
 books. 102 Ascanius—Shadwell was to Flecknoe what
 Ascanius was to Aeneas. 105 Lambent—gently brilliant
 106 altars—temple at carthage 112 Unction—application
 of the sacred oil at coronation. 114 Sinister—left. 114 ball
 —the regal emblem put in the left hand at the time of
 coronation, symbolising world dominion. 116 Love's
 Kingdom—Flecknoe's dull pastoral tragi—comedy.

By this time the report (rumour) about the impending coronation ceremony had spread far and wide and all the dullards from far and ner—from the heterogenous population of London, from the northern suburbs (Bunhill) and the old Roman road in the eastern part of the city (Watling—street) *i. e.* from all the suburban quarters of London—flocked at the spot to see the solemn ceremony. The approach to the throne was not covered by a Persian carpet but by the mutilated works of neglected authors—worthless poets and dramatists like Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby etc. while loads of Shadwell's own writhings blocked the approach road. Defrauded booksellers, cheated of their dues, captained by the publisher Herringman took upon themselves the duties of the guard of honour (the yeoman of the guard,—the king's personal retinue). Old Flecknoe sat on a throne made up of his own books—the monuments of his own dullness. At his right hand set Shadwell, the crown prince, prominently on his throne. Just as Rome's first hope was the hero Aeneas, the legendary founders of the city and the second hope was his worthy sons. As Canius, so also the first hope of London's worthless poets and dramatists was Flecknoe and in his absence Shadwell was his second hope. Instead a halo of glory, a mist like darkness expressive of a virtual intellectual black-out within his capacious mind hang round Mac Flecknoe's face.

So Shadwell's brow was covered by a kind of misty darkness, softly radiant and visible in half-lights and Shadows. Just as Hannibal, the Carthaginian general, swore to his father eternal war with Rome early in his life, so did Shadwell swear in the cause of dullness represented by his father and well did he keep that oath till death. Flecknoe, the king himself performed the sacred anointing ceremony in his dual role of a king by rank and position and a priestly profession. He then placed in his left hand a mug of all instead of the ball and in his right hand a copy of the extreme dull pastoral large comedy ('Love's Kingdom by Flecknoe') which was to serve as a sceptre, an

Whose righteous lore the prince had practised young
And from whose loins recorded "Psyche" sprung.
His temples, last, with poppies were o'erspread, 120
That nodding seemed to consecrate his head.
Just at that point of time, if fame not lie,
On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.
So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook,
Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.
The admiring throng loud acclamations make
And omens of his future empire take.

120. Poppies etc.—crowned with the narcotic poppy
(emblematic of dullness and drowsiness) **121. consecrate**—
sanctify. **125. presage of sway**—prophecy of rule.

insignia of royal authority and code of administration. The son had benefitted immensely by his father's precepts quite early in his life and had written the stupid rhymed opera (*Psyche*) in the paternal vein just as a son springs out of the loins of his father). Last of all, a chaplet of poppies was placed round his head in place of a crown. The crown formed by happy leaves and flowers waved in the breeze and seemed to impart a kind of kingly sanctity. Just at that moment (if report does not speak false) twelve aged owls flew over the spot, thereby symbolising the beginning of the reign of the dullard and also prognosticating the great and bright future of the newly crowned king of Dullness, Just as Romulus. The legendary founder of Rome while choosing the site for the town of Rome on the Palatine hill by the side of the river Tiber took the simultaneous flight of twelve vultures over the spot as a kind of favourable omen from the gods, so was the flight of twelve owls taken by the cheering and enthusiastic crowd of sightseers as a sure indication of the greatness of the dominion of dulness of their beloved prince Shadwell.

The sire then shook the honours of his head,
 And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
 Full on the filial dulness : long he stood, 130
 Repelling from his breast the raging God ;
 At length burst out in this prophetic mood :
 "Heavens bless my son ! from Ireland let him reign
 "To far Barbadoes on the western main ;
 "Of his dominion may no end be known
 "And greater than his father's be his throne ;
 "Beyond 'Love's Kingdom' let him stretch his pen !"
 He paused, and all the people cried "Amen."
 Then thus continued he : "My son, advance
 "Still in new impudence, new ignorance. 140
 "Success let others teach, learn thou from me
 "Pangs without birth and fruitless industry.
 "Let 'Virtuosos' in five years be writ,
 "Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit.
 "Let gentle George in triumph tread the stage,
 "Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage ;
 "Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,
 "And in their folly show the writer's wit.
 "Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence
 "And justify their author's want of sense. 150
 "Let them be all by thy own model made
 "Of dulness and desire no foreign aid,
 "That they to future ages may be known,
 "Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own.

128. honours of his head—his grey hair. 129. damps
 of oblivion—thin drops of forgetfulness. 130. full—in
 substantial quantity. 131. the raging god—divine inspira-
 tion. 137. main—Ocean. 138. 'Amen'—Be it so. 140.
 Still—always. 142. Pangs—travail *i. e.* pain of child
 birth. 145. George—George Etheridge the famous comedian.
 147. Pit—popular audience. 152. Foreign aid—external
 inspiration. 153. That—so that. 154. Issue.....own—produ-
 ctions of your dull brain.

Then the old father (Flecknoe) looking venerable with his grey hair and his forehead giving out damps or dews of oblivion fixed his vacant gaze on his son (who had inherited the father's dullness in a substantial measure) stood up over the head of his son making a heroic effort to overcome his dullness and then invoked the blessings of God on his son on the following manner :—

“May God bless my son. May he reign from Ireland (the land of his intellectual nativity) over the entire watery region to the end of the Atlantic in the British West Indies. May he be a far greater king than his father (*i. e.* may his notoriety as a dullard be greater than his father's (Flecknoe's writing worse stuff even than his father's *Love's Kingdom*.) Having said this he made a pause when the people shouted out ‘Be it so.’ in their approbation. Then Flecknoe resumed his speech to depict in glowing terms the future greatness of his son in these terms. My son, let your ignorance and impudence increase from strength to strength (more and more). It is for others to teach you success in the art of writing for he (Flecknoe) had dismally failed to leave this himself after more than half a century's hard labour. Let dramas like *Virtuoso* (written by you) be written for over five years without showing the slightest trace of wit and grain of sensible thought in them. Though fools fops, rakes and men of fashion among the dramatic characters of George Ethridge, the famous comedian, would by their folly show the wit of their writer and win for themselves popular applause, your (Shadwell) own fools and fops would be so dull and uninteresting that they would save you from the charge of being witty. Let all your characters be cast in your own image and pattern. Let them not owe anything to external inspiration or be representations of actual characters but rather than depend on the powers of your brain to be dull enough, resembling you in all respects as children resemble parents.”

"Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,

"All full of thee and differing but in name.

"But let no alien Sedley interpose

"To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.

"And when false flowers of rhetoric thou wouldst cull,

"Trust nature, do not labour to be dull ; 160

"But write thy best and top ; and in each line

"Sir Formal's oratory will be thine.

"Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill

"And does thy northern dedications fill.

"Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame

"By arrogating Jonson's hostile name ;

"Let father Flecknoe fire thy mind with praise

"And uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.

"Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part :

"What share have we in nature or in art ? 170

"Where did his wit on learning fix a brand

"And rail at arts he did not understand ?

"Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein

"Or swept the dust in Psyche's humble strain ?

157 alien Sedley—Sir Charles Sedley, where genius is 'alien' (foreign) to yours. **158 hungry Epsom Prose**—the prose of Epsom wells, which is entirely devoid of wit. **164 Sir Formal's oratory**—the pompous utterances of a fool in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*. **164 Northern dedications**—dedications of many of Shadwell's plays to the Duke of Newcastle. **168 Uncle Ogleby**—a poor poetaster of Edinburgh,—a kingman in point of dullness. **173 Prince Nicander's vein**—in the manner of prince Nicander (an absurd character) in the love scene between him and Psyche. **174 Strain**—manner.

Moreover, all those characters in your comedies whom you introduce as witty be but products of your own dull brain and be alike in all respects except that they differ only in names. Do not allow a man like Sedley (Whose genius is alien to yours) to intrude into your work with his elegant prose. Your own prose is utterly devoid of wit. It is futile to seek the help of a famous wit like Sir Charles Sedley to put in clever and witty dialogues to relieve your otherwise dull writings. You had better depend upon the powers of your own brain to be dull enough. False rhetoric is natural to your genius and you need not take pains to be indiculously pompous and dull. Why should you undertake to study the style and manner of other writers to prove his dullness when he could be easily dull without taking such pains? (All that you need is to give a free scope to your own genius and you will easily out do others in nonsense). Your style inevitably takes after the stilted style of your own creation. (Sir Formal Triple), Pompous in expression and trivial in content, whether you try or not. This is particularly in evidence in his "Northern dedications" *i. e.* your frequent dedications to the Duke of Newcastle and members of his family. Do not deceive yourself in your attempt to seek literary fame by imitating the comedies of humour of Ben Jonson whose genius had nothing in common with yours. Be proud of Flecknoe who had no spark of the genius of Ben Jonson but emulate Ogleby your kinsman in point of dullness. Do not go out of your way to imitate one who has nothing in common in either natural genius or intellectual qualities. How can you imagine that your comedic genius is akin to Jonson's? Did Jonson ever villify the arts of dramatic and poetic composition as you villified the poetry and drama of superior artists? Did Jonson ever present the absurd character of a romantic gallant like prince Nicander in his stupid profession of love to Psyche as you did in your opera. Psyche, performing such dull domestic drudgery as sweeping the floor as you make you Psyche perform?

"When did his Muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
 "As thou whole Etherege dost transfuse to thine ?
 "But so transfused as oil on waters flow,
 "His always floats above, thine sinks below.
 "This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,
 "New humours to invent for each new play : 180
 "This is that boasted bias of thy mind,
 "By which one way to dulness 'tis inclined,
 "Which makes thy writings lean on one side still,
 "And, in all changes, that way bends thy will.
 "Nor let thy mountain belly make pretence
 "Of likeness ; thine's a tympany of sense.
 "A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,
 "But sure thou art but a kilderkin of wit.
 "Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep ;
 "Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep. 190
 "With whate'er gall thou setst thyself to write,
 "Thy inoffensive satires never bite ;
 "In thy felonious heart though venom lies,
 "It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.

175. **Purloin**—steal, pilfer. 176. **Transfuse**—transfer.
Wondrous Way—wonderful manner in which your genius
 works. 180. **new humours**—new types of eccentricities in
 characterisation. 186. **tympany**—swelling of belly due to
 the accumulation of gas. 187. **tun of man**—a man as
 huge as a cask. 188. **Kilderkin**—a small cask. 189. **gentle**
number—dull verses. **creep**—crawl. 191. **gall**—bitterness,
 rancour.

When did Ben Jonson plagiarise scenes from the comedies of his contemporaries like Fletcher as you did remove bodily wholescenes from the comedies of Etheridge and seek to pass them as your own? But whenever they were so bodily lifted and transplanted in your plays it was very easy to distinguish his borrowings from his own silly productions. Just as when oil is poured into water, it floats on the surface, so also the highly witty stuff borrowed from Etheridge could be discerned by all while the stupid, dull-headed and heavy compositions from Shadwell could be perceptible to all. The creation of this type of eccentric characters is your speciality just as most of the characters of Ben Jonson are embodiments of humours. It is this bias of your mind that makes all your writings incline towards dullness. Your mind is thus very much influenced by this 'humour of dullness' in your literary composition. This turn for stupidity and nonsensicality. But do not imagine that because you have a huge wellrounded body, like Jonson, you resemble him in other respects too. In your case your fatness is due only to the swelling out of your body with empty gaseous nonsense within you. Though physically formidable, you are intellectually very poor. You rather resemble me. Like my own writings your tragedies amuse while your comedic efforts tend to produce a soporific effect. However willing you may be to around through your satires, they are pointless and ineffective. Though your heart is full of poison, your satirical efforts are so silly that they never hurt. You simply cannot transmit some of the

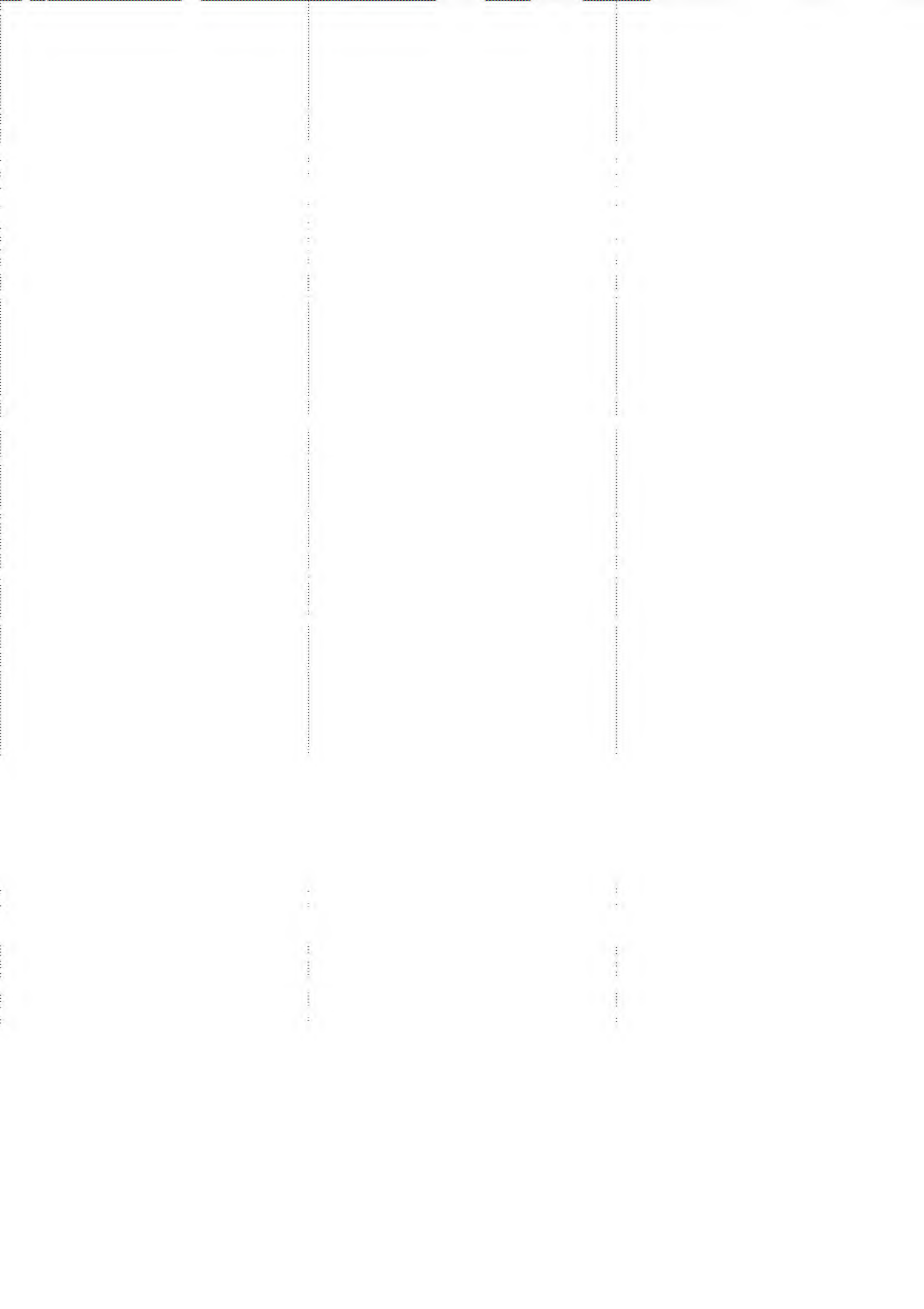
"Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
 "In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.
 "Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command!
 "Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
 "There thou mayest wings display and altars raise;
 "And torture one poor word ten thousand ways ; 200
 "Or, if thou wouldst thy different talents suit,
 "Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute."
 He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
 For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared,
 And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.
 Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,
 Borne upwards by a subterranean wind.
 The mantle fell to the young prophet's part
 With double portion of his father's art.

196. Keen Iambics—pungent satirical verse (Greek satirical poetry was written in Iambic Hexameter) **mild.**
Anagram—harmless interchange of letters (a favourite pastime in the early 15th century) **198. Acrostic land**—the realm of acrostics. **204. Bruce and Longville**—characters in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*. **208. Drugget robe**—garment made of 'Norwich druggest *i. e.* coarse woollen cloth (vide: 38) **209. Father's art**—Flecknoe's poetic genius (spoken of ironically)

poison in your heart to your pen—all because you are a stupid Irish poet without the power to express in terms of language some of the malice of your heart.

The proper sphere of your literary activity lies in the somewhat foolish and frivolous exercise of the brain with words and phrases—in the formation of new words by interchanging letters, inventing acrostics, making fanciful figures with words playing with words and at most in the setting of his own songs to tune and singing them. It is time therefore you gave up your ambition to rule over the world of letters which is full of strife for you. You should be better advised to choose some tame province of intellectual exercise in which all this required of you is mechanical skill in forming acrostics and such like wit exercises. Your versatile genius will have ample opportunities of creative self-expression if you set your own songs to music and then sing them to the accompaniment of some musical instrument.

The last words of Flecknoe were scarcely audible as he suddenly fell into a kind of trap-door which opened below his feet, like the sudden disappearance of Sir Formal Trifle, an empty headed oratorical character in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*. As Flecknoe disappeared under the ground, he left behind him his coarse woollen garment which was carried upwards by a sudden gust of wind flown from the interior of the earth. Thus the mantle of Flecknoe fell upon Shadwell who inherited from his father his stupidity which was twice that of Flecknoe.



NOTES
AND
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

NOTES

Mac Flecknoe—literally it means 'son of Flecknoe' (Mac—son in Gaelic) Richard Flecknoe is the father and predecessor of Thomas Shadwell in the kingdom of dullness, who is satirised here by Dryden in reply to his '*The Medal of John Bayes*'. Richard himself was an Irishman, a Roman Catholic priest and a wretched poetaster. The son is here represented as the intellectual successor to the dullness of his father, Richard Flecknoe (see notes below)

"What it was that induced Dryden to fix upon the obscure Irish writer Richard Flecknoe as the reigning monarch of the Empire of Dulness is unknown and it is impossible to advance any better conjecture than that Flecknoe may have been brought to his mind by a commonplace satire of Marvell's *Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome*. That piece, however, could suggest no more than the name. The essential conception is Dryden's own." (Hugh Walker)

True blue.....Poet T. S.—'True Blue' means faithful Protestant. Blue was the colour of the badge of the Tories or church party. For 'true' blue Cf. North's *Examen* quoted by Churton Collins. They (The Tories) called their adversaries 'True Blues' because such were not satisfied to be protestants, *as the churchmen* were, but must be 'true' protestants, implying the others to be false ones just not papists" "T. S." are the initials of Thomas Shadwell.

Note : *Richard Flecknoe* was an Irish priest and a poetaster who died in 1678 after writing a little good verse and great deal of bad. He had paid compliments to Dryden and there is no reason to suppose that Dryden had any enmity towards him ; his part indeed is simply representative and the satire is reserved for Shadwell. Flecknoe whom

but for Dryden's work no one would have inquired about, was, and had been for some time a stock-subject for allusive satire. (Saintsbury). Richard Flecknoe was an inferior verse writer of the seventeenth century who wrote profusely within any pretention to merit or originality. "His five plays are certainly beneath contempt, his epigrams and miscellaneous poems, as a rule dull and tame but his prose *Enigmatical Characters* are not without merit" (Churton Collins). That Richard Flecknoe was a *stock subject* for satire is proved by the somewhat virulent satire which Andrew Marvell wrote against him, as early as 1645. Evidently this suggested Dryden's choice of Flecknoe, for in the dedication to *Limberham* (1678) Dryden notices "How natural is the connection between a bad poet and Flecknoe". Swift also made a contemptuous reference to Flecknoe in his '*On Poetry, A Rhapsody*'. (1744)

"Remains a difficulty still
To purchase fame by writing ill,
From Flecknoe down to Howard's time,
How few have reached the low sublime."

But for Dryden's satire 'Mac Flecknoe' there is no doubt about the facts that Flecknoe would have remained unknown and that he achieved an ignominious immortality chiefly through Dryden's satiric triumph. Thus it is that the two rival poets—Dryden and Shadwell of the Tory and Whig parties respectively came to satirise each other. Flecknoe's name was found handy because of the contemptuous reference to him by poets and critics.

Substance—lines 1—12 : Flecknoe on the look out for a successor to the throne of Dullness :

After reigning as the undisputed monarch of the Kingdom of Dullness for upwards of half a century old Flecknoe realised the great truth that even a monarch of his status must yield to fate. So he became anxious to settle the question of succession from among great host of dull scribblers to fix his choice on one of his progeny who was the

most suitable person to rule over the kingdom of non-sensical literature and fight a relentless war against good sense.

1. **All.....things**—things human with perishable bodies *i. e.* mean of all ages, times and ranks. **Subject to decay**—destined to die. 2. **When...obey**—Even kings must stoop to fate and get ready to depart from the world when the call comes. 3. **Thus...found**—Richard Flecknoe (The obscure Irish writer and poetaster, who had reigned over his Empire of Dulness for a long time and who died in 1678 at a ripe old age) was not allowed to realise this great truth *viz.* he must give up his murmuring breath when the call comes. See “Note” above for Flecknoe.

Comment—“The essential conception of Flecknoe as a monarch called to empire young and reigning during a long life ‘through all the realms of Nonsense absolute’ is Dryden’s own.” (H. Walker)

3. **Augustus**—Gains Julius Caesar Octavius (63 B. C. A. D. 14)—the nephew of Julius Caesar and first Roman emperor, occupying the throne from 27 B. C. till his death. Augustus was only a title given him by the senate and the people in 27 B. C. to express their veneration for him. He was studying at Apollonia when his uncle (Julius Caesar) was murdered at Rome in March 44. B. C. He set out for Italy, and upon landing, was received with enthusiasm by the troops. He ruled for 44 years. 3. **Like Augustus**—with cynical humour Dryden brings out the comparison between the most contemptible poetaster of the age (Flecknoe) and the first and greatest of the Roman Emperors thus : (1) Both were great as Emperors ; (2) Both started reigning as emperors at a young age ; (3) Both ruled long—Flecknoe took up his pen some 50 years back while Augustus ruled for 44 years. 5. **In...dispute**—Flecknoe, the Irish Roman Catholic priest and poet, was also a dramatist and miscellaneous prose writer. Beginning his poetic career quite early in life for upwards of half a century (his first poem is dated 1626 and he died about 1678), Richard Flecknoe could achieve nothing in the domain of letters. “Of his five dramas he

could only get one to be acted, and that too was damned." (Churton Collins). **6. Through...absolute**—Flecknoe held undisputed sway over the empire of dulness both as a poet and a prose writer. This is borne out by the following: (1) He had gone on producing poems, plays and prose pieces for upwards of half a century—

"Though it were in spite
Of Nature and his stars to write"

None of his five dramas was known to have been acted (2) He was aversely criticised and even condemned by contemporary writers; Andrew Marvell, a lyric writer of fine power, and a writer of satirical verse, satirised him in his '*Flecknoe and English priest at Rome*.' (3) Dryden himself in his dedication to *Limberham* noticed "How natural is the connection between a bad poet and Flecknoe." (4) The Earl of Dorset in his satire on Edward Howard referred to Flecknoe in the lines—

"These...antipodes to common sense
These fools to Flecknoe, pry'thee tell me whence
Does all this mighty mass of dulness spring."
—Quoted by Churton Collins

7. This aged prince—*i. e.* Richard Flecknoe who lived upto a good old age wielding his pen for over 50 years. **7. Now.....peace**—Acknowledged as unrivalled among wretched scribblers of the time Flecknoe exercised sovereign power over the realm of nonsense (his intellectual kingdom) peacefully. **8. blest.....increase**—Nature has blessed him with large progeny *i. e.* a large number of dull scribblers and worthless writers who are aspirants of the throne of the Kingdom of Dulness and nonsense over which Flecknoe has reigned for too long. **9. Worn...business**—exhausted by hard intellectual exercise covering a long period of time. Flecknoe was an industrious scribbler who began in 1626 and went on producing poems, plays and prose pieces without interruption till 1678. **Debate**—deliberate and seriously

think out. 10 To settle state—to decide the question of a suitable successor to him in his empire of Dulness among his numerous progeny (dull scribblers who were aspirants after the throne.)

Comment : The social condition of Restoration life its artificial gaiety—favoured the development of satire. Satire as a relatively low form of literature, can succeed best if it is clear, concise and *topical* above all things. In the seventeenth century the question of the succession of the political state was topical and a very familiar issue. And the public mind was exercised over this. e. g. the question cropped up on the death of Elizabeth (1603), the death of Cromwell (1658) and the latter years of Charles II (1679-85) “It was certainly vexing the whole nation. Thus Flecknoe’s position was easy to realise” (J. W. Hales) 11-12 **And... wit**—thinking which among the poetasters of the day would be the fittest to succeed him and gain his recognition as the most worthless among writers 12 **Sons**—intellectual progeny of dunces. 12 **to reign...wit**—maintain a state of hostility against sense or intelligence i. e. gifted poets who wrote sensible things.

Note—Here wit means not only good sense, intelligence but also a certain talent for *cleverness* and *ingenuity* in saying things effectively which characterised gifted poets of Dryden’s time. The word ‘wit’ probably means Dryden himself as representing ‘good sense’ as against the still grossly abusive and scurrilous attacks of Shadwell in his “*The Medal of John Bayes*” (John Bayes stands for Dryden, who has already been ridiculed in *the Rehearsal* of the Duke of Buckingham with whom Shadwell also was believed to have collaborated).

Substance—Lines 13-63 :

Flecknoe thought that the problem had solved itself by nature who urged that of all his intellectual progeny he resembled himself most closely should succeed him. This

man was Shadwell who justified his claim on the following grounds. (1) While others exhibited a faint glimmer of sense, Shadwell did not show the least brilliancy of wit. (2) Nature chose his unwieldy person and physical corpulence as the receptacle of his intellectual darkness and stupidity which hinder all clear thinking. (3) In point of intellectual dullness Flecknoe himself must yield the palm to Shadwell for he is but the precursor to the greater dullard. Dull dramatists were nothing in comparison with the majestic stupidity of Shadwell. (4) Flecknoe's senseless writings—his poetic and musical performances which had won recognition from the then king of Portugal, fell far short of the standard of dullness attained by Shadwell when he sought to enlist in his behalf court favour by his idiotic performances with his flattering poetry set to music as a band-master to a party of musicians while proceeding in his boat alongside of the king's royal barge over the Thames. (5) As a band-master of his company of musicians the roll of manuscripts in Shadwell's hands served as his wand. But the monotonous regularity with which he moved his wand far outstripped the mechanical uniformity of the steps of famous French dancing master of his time. (6) Shingleton the leader of the king's private band and also a comic actor of the time swore that he would never more play the part of Villerius (in Davenant's dramatic opera) because Shadwell's own opera 'Psyche' had thrown all other operas completely into the shade.

When Flecknoe thought of the immense potentialities of his promising son, he burst into a parental rapture and wept for joy for having begotten him. He concluded that all his son's dramas asserted his unassailable right to the throne of dullness.

13 **'Tis resolved**—the question of succession to the throne of dullness is easily solved by Nature herself. Nature has transmitted to his intellectual heir (Shadwell) hereditary (paternal) qualities which eminently fitted him to be Flecknoe's successor.

Comment : In fairness to Thomas Shadwell (1642 ?-92) it may be stated in his defence that he was by no means the wretched poetaster and worthless writer which Dryden representing him to be. He wrote nearly 20 plays. Of these "Epsom Wells" (1673) and "Busy Fair" (1689) give interesting pictures of contemporary manners and well-known 17th century localities. He superseded Dryden as poet laureate at the Revolution though his claims to that position were not so high. Anyway some of his comedies were not without merit. "They do not, indeed, exhibit any brilliancy of wit or ingenuity of intrigue, but the characters are truly dramatic, original and well drawn ; and the picture of manners which they exhibit gives us a lively idea of those of the author's age."

12-14 : **for Nature...me**—his natural endowment of stupidity which he has inherited in a substantial measure from his intellectual father (Flecknoe) constitutes his strongest claim to the throne. He is most like his father in stupidity. 15 **My...dears**—The implication is Shadwell's writings closely resemble Flecknoe's in point of dullness and mental capacity. Shadwell is a perfect replace of his father. 16 **mature...years**—the earliest writings of Shadwell bear unmistakable signs of stupidity which got confirmed in his later years or rather he was born with the fullest measure of dullness even in his tender years.

Comment : Notice the epigrammatic brilliance of Dryden's expressions "mature in dulness" suggesting that Shadwell was born with the fullest measure of dulness *i. g.* congenitally slow-witted and irredeemably stupid.

18 **Who...stupidity**—who is incorrigibly and irremediable stupid in nature. 19 **rest**—other poetasters and claimants to the throne of dullness. *e. g.* Howard, Samuel Pordage, Settle etc. who participated in a kind of literary war with their contemporaries 19 to **some pretence**—other poetasters may exhibit a faint ray of intelligence in their writings but Shadwell is never guilty of it. 20 **Deviates etc**—strays into saying sensible things in their

writings. **Note**—This expression strays into sense has passed into a proverb. Sense is not in the tun of Shadwell who is used to walk along the path of nonsense and who would not walk into the path of sense, even by mistake, leaving the beaten track. In this sense *deviate* means lapse from correctness. 21 **beams of wit**—faint glimmers of sense or intelligence *on other souls*—on other poetasters or aspirants to the throne of dullness. 22 **strike through**—penetrate through intellectual darkness with great difficulty. **lucid interval**—period of sanity between fits on intellectual blackout. Cf Bacon "Lucid intervals and happy pauses" 23 **Genuine night**—darkness unrelieved by a single ray of light (sense of reason) 23 **Shadwell's...ray**—Shadwell's intellectual darkness was impenetrable and unrelieved by the least show of sense, comparable only to the original darkness of Erebus—the dark region between earth and Hades. 24 **His rising fogs**—Shadwell's stupidity is compared to a dark mist arising in a visible form from the brain enveloping the mind and hindering it from all clear thinking. So dense is this mist that the light of sense cannot make its way through impenetrable solidity. 15 **goodly fabric** — Shadwell's portly bulk which is at once gross and unwieldy. **his goodly...eye**—his unwieldy person is indeed a sumptuous sight. Cf. 187 'mountain belly' 189 "tun of man". Dryden ridiculed Shadwell's portly bulk in the character of 'Og' (An Amorite giant) in his *Absalom and Achitophel* Part II : Cf.

"Now stop your noses, readers, all and some,
For here is a tun of midnight work to come,
Og from a treason tavern rolling home.
Round as a globe, and liquored every chink,
Goodby and great, he sails behind his link.
Within all this bulk there's nothing lost in Og,
For every inch, that is not fool, in rogue
The midwife laid her hand in his thick skull,
With this prophetic blessing—Be thou dull!"

26 **designed...majesty**—planned by Nature for supremacy in respect of stupidity. Shadwell's physical grossness or corpulence was but a symbol of his intellectual stupidity as an oak tree, standing majestically for hundreds of years only to fall "dry, bald and sery" for the true worth of a man does not lie in bulk but in intrinsic merit. 27 **monarch oaks**—huge oak tree, with their far-flung branches over shadowing other trees far smaller in *dimension*. **Shade the plain etc**—cover a wide area flaunting their branches in a very impressive manner. 28 **Supinely**—lying face upwards in a listless manner. 29 **Heywood**—Thomas Heywood (1575-1650 ?) wrote a number of plays many of which are lost. His chief strength lay in the domestic drama. His best plays are 'A woman killed with Kindness, The Fair Maid of the West, and 'the English Traveller'. They are not devoid of merit. Charles Lamb called him a "sort of prose Shakespeare" the last of the great Romantic school of dramatists and as such Dryden, a classicist, was unable to appreciate him (C. O. D.) 29 **Shirley**—James Shirley (1596-1666) wrote some forty dramas of which the greater number are extant. The tragedies include: 'The Maid's Revenge' (1626) and the Cardinal (1641). He also wrote comedies of manners and romantic comedies including: *Changes or love in a Maze* (The interchanges of affection between three pairs of lovers). *Hyde Park* (1632) He also wrote the contention of Ajax and Ulysses (1659)—a romantic entertainment ending with the famous dirge.

"The glories of our blood and state
Are Shadows, not substantial things."

—(C. O. D.) Dryden has not done justice to either of these two Elizabethan dramatists. Heywood's tragedy '*A Woman Killed with Kindness*' is one of the most powerful and touching plays which have come down to us from the Elizabethan age. About Shirley, Charles Lamb observed as follows. 'The last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common' (*Lamb : Specimens of English Dramatic*

Poets) (Churton Collins) 29. **Types of thee**—your fore-runners in the line of dull and stupid writings ; they were your archetypes or prototypes and original models which were outdone by you (Shadwell). 30. **Prophet of tautology**—high priest of the stupid art of unnecessary repetition or redundancy. 'Tautology' means saying again of what has been said, especially the unconscious or careless or rhetorical addition of words that add nothing to the sense (*e. g.* useless protests will not avail in sorrowful grief) (P. O. C.) Their bankruptcy of ideas was sought to be made up by silly repetitions of words and phrases. 31. **a dunce.....they**—Flecknoe prides himself in the fact that he was admittedly a greater dullard than Heywood and Shirley with this reservation that his son (Shadwell) outdid them all in sheer stupidity (dunce—dullard. It is derived from the name of mediaeval schoolman *Dams Cotus* (1265 ?—1308 ?). His followers, called Dunsmen or Dunses rallied against the new learning. So the name Duns or Dunce soon passed into the sense of "*blockhead incapable of learning or scholarship*" (C. O. D.) 32 **Was...way**—God himself sent down to the earth two dullards (Heywood and Shirley) to indulge in stupid writings to prepare the mind of the readers for the advent of one greater than the forerunners like John the Baptist, the prophet, who claimed that he had been sent down to earth only to prepare the way for one greater than himself (*viz.*, Jesus Christ) Cf. John the Baptist's utterance in this behalf : "Prepare ye the path of the Lord, for the kingdom of God is at hand". Likewise Flecknoe prepared the mind of his clientele of the literary world for the reception of one (Shadwell) who was soon going to be thrown completely into the shade by his son. 33 **Coarsely ...drugget**—dressed in a coarse woollen garment made of the rough Norwich stuff. This coarse clothing refers to the poverty of the Irish priest (Flecknoe) and the simple dress of John the Baptist who used to put on a loin-cloth made of camel's hair. Norwich is a town of Norfolk, the birth-place of Shadwell. Though an Irish man Flecknoe himself

came from Norfolk. Besides, it is interesting to note that Dryden here ascribes to Flecknoe the dress he is said himself to have worn when he first came to London. "I remember", writes a correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1745, "John Dryden before he paid court to the great in one uniform clothing of Norwich drugget." (quoted by J. C. Collins) 34 **To teach**.....**name**—to prepare the minds of the readers before hand so that when the time comes, they may be in a position to appreciate work of far greater stupidity and dullness written by Shadwell. Cf. The preaching of John the Baptist. "There come the one mightier than I after me." 35 **My**.....**string**—the poetry that I once composed. **Whilom**—formerly, quondam e. g. his *whilom* friend (former) **Lute**—literally, a guitar like instrument of the 14th—17th centuries; **Warbling**.....**lute**—a conventional expression meaning poetry. (*The lyre*—lyric poetry) originally meant to be sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. 36 **When John**.....**sung**—The king of Portugal recognised his merit in the art of composition of music which Flecknoe had sung in his court at Lisbon. As Flecknoe says in his 'Travels'. "He no sooner understood of my arrival but he sent for me to court. The next day he sent for me again when after two or three hours trial of my skill especially in the composition of music in which his majesty chiefly exceeded I passed court doctor." (Quoted by J. C. Collins) 37 **Was**.....**day**—this served only as an introduction to the day of greater triumph (when Shadwell was actually appointed as musical entertainer at the court of king Charles II or when he sought to enlist the favour or patronage of the king). "This evidently refers to some actual incident, but Sir Walter Scott and the commentators have been unable to discover its, and I have not been more successful". (J. C. Collins) 38 **When**.....**way**—when you (Shadwell) sailed in a pleasure-boat over the crystal-clear waters of the Thames. The particular incident to which this refers, has not been traced by commentators. 39 **With**.....**barge**—as you sailed in a pleasure-boat, the oarsmen

were striking the water rhythmically i.e. with regular monotonous strokes thereby producing a nice metrical effect (while keeping time to the mechanical rhythm of the music made by you and your band of musicians and singers. **Well timed**—playing rhythmically with a nice metrical effect **before...barge**—in front of the pleasure-boat in which king Charles II was himself seated.

Note : It was just possible that Shadwell and his party of musicians might have sought to have enlisted court favour by entertaining the king and his courtiers seated in the royal barge while out for an evening pleasure trip, as was the custom among kings ever since the time of Elizabeth. 40 **Swelled...charge**—puffed up with your proficiency in music at the proud privilege of leading a choir of singers out to sing the glory of God in heaven like a band of angels. **Celestial charge**—heavenly gift. 41 **And, big.....host**—elated with the proud consciousness of being the leader of the procession of singers arising out of your proficiency in music. **Big with music**—full of your songs of praise in flattery to the king to carry favour with him. **Commander of the host**—leader of the band of musicians. 42 **The like...tost**—no such scene—with your fat body sawaying this way and that, with hands thrown out in order to direct your band and making ridiculous gestures—was ever depicted in any one of your own absurd and non sensical plays. **Epsom Blankets**—*Epsom Wells*, an opera by Shadwell is referred to here.

Note : Probably Dryden is here referring to Shadwell's own words in his 'Sullen Lovers' in order to ridicule him. This is indeed a nice stroke of the satiric art, Cf. Shadwell's. 'Such a fellow as he deserves to be *tossed in a blanket*'. Tossing one in a blanket means to lay him on it, raising it by the corners, and ultimately slackening and frightening it suddenly by way of *perpetrating a practical joke on the victim* and humiliating and opponent. 43 **Methinks...sail**—It seems to me that I visualise in my imagination a second Arion. 'Legends relate that dolphins, charmed by the

songs of this ancient poet and musician of Lesbos (600-B. C.) wafted him to land, when he had been thrown overboard by the sailors conveying him" (C. O. D.) having conspired among themselves to murder him for the prizes he was carrying with him during his return voyage home from Sicily (Corinth).

Comment—Notice carefully the mock heroic style in verse (English 5—foot iambic) in high flown language. The *mock heroic vision* of a true epic is here but in effect it is deliberately ludicrous ending, as it does, in an *anti-climax*. Dryden ridicules the pretensions of the latter day second Arion as a poet and musician, singing in an aquatic atmosphere in order to enlist court favour. 44 **The lute...nail**—all the time the course and clumsy finger-tips (thumb) and nail of Shadwell continuously played upon the strings of the lute which trembled in fear at the rude strokes, as he was making a ludicrous attempt making music in order to carry court favour. 45 **At...thumb**—as if his thumb armed with sharp nails, was a kind of sword by which he inflicted cruel cuts on the musical notes (trebles and basses).

Note : Here again by a clever employment of the expression "Well-Sharpened thumb" Dryden makes the description of Shadwell's mastery of the art of music all the more ludicrous. The words nail and thumb can hardly be associated with the deftness of hand of a man who is the head of a band of musicians out to entertain the king himself. 46 **the treble...roar**—the net result of the clumsy handling of the lute and the rude strokes of the nail by Shadwell, was that both trebles, and basses uttered their characteristic notes of distress through fear as he murdered music. **from shore...shore**—from both the banks of the river Thames. **Trebles**—the shrillest notes in music (highest female's or boy's voice) **basses**—gravest and the most deep sounding notes in music. **Squeak**—utter a shrill cry as of distress. **Moar**—set up deep groans (as Shadwell by his thumb armed with sharp nails inflicts cruel cuts on these

musical notes) 47 **Pissing a ley**—the passage or lane running out of the strand road into Holywell street. **Echoes... call**—the musical notes produced by Shadwell resounded in the near by lanes and by lanes. 48 **Ashton hall**—this allusion remains obscure inspite of researches by various commentators of Dryden. Churton Collins says, "It appears from the *Tixhall letters* (Part I page 60) that Walter, Lord Aston, had a house at the Mulbery Gardens in 1635 which may have continued in the family after his death in 1639 and been known as Aston Hall. There is an Aston mentioned in the *Essay on Satire* where he is called 'dull Aston' and in the *Epistle to Julian* where his worthless ballads are referred to, and it is not unlikely that this Aston is to be identified with Colonel Aston, a friend of Sheffield's (See his *Memoirs*, Works ii, pages 8-10). He was evidently a well-to-do person and a scribbler, and his residence may have been know as Aston Hall, but I can trace no connection between his person and Shadwell." 49 **About...throng**—a large number of small fishes collected round about your boat, just as the ancient Greek lyric poet, Arion was surrounded by song-loving dolphins attracted by his inspired strains as he had thrown himself into the sea when the sailors coveted his treasures and meditated his murder.

Comment—Notice the ludicrous nature of the comparison. The irony lies in the fact that fishes are said to be insensible to music but such were the inspired and soul enthralling songs of Shadwell that they gathered in shoals round Shadwell in order to listen to them. Here the comparison is between song loving dolphins and little fishes supposed to be insensible to music. 50 **the morning toast**—"No doubt one great amusement of leisurely voyagers up and down the Thames in the days of pleasure barges would be throwing over pieces of bread and toast and watching one eager contentions pursuit of the little fishes. Or, more probably, this passage refers to fragments of the *morning toast* which, thrown out for the benefit of the swans (—a

great number of these were kept on the river on the old days—) become objects of desire and pursuit to the fishes." gather round the king's pleasure barge to pick up crumbs of scorched bread (toast) thrown out of the break-fast table. Prof. Hales suggests that the reference may also be to morning walkers along the embankment of the Thames, feeding the swans (—of which a great number used to be kept on the river in those days) Lines 51-59. In these lines Dryden the dull and mechanical monotony of his musical notes as well as of that of his verses (his opera *Psyche* in particular and his other dramas) 51 **prince...band**—chief band-master or leader of your company of musicians 52 **Thou...hand**—you wave and flourish ostentatiously the roll of your manuscript in your hand and move it up and down as if you were threshing corn with a flail (a hand threshing implement).

Comment—Notice the mock heroic vision of Dryden which is almost epical in character. This is brought out in the ludicrous comparisons (1) the flourishing of the roll of papers (manuscripts) of Shadwell serves as a baton or the waving of the bandmaster's or conductor's wand for beating time and for directing the band of musicians ; (2) the clumsiness of movement of Shadwell's large hand, as it moved up and down rather awkwardly is compared to the threshing operations of a farmer separating the grain from corn by beating with a flail ; (3) the roll of manuscript stands for the conductor's baton or wand to direct the band of musicians. 53 **St. Andre's feet**—the dull and mechanical regularity of the steps of the famous French dancing master of the time (St. Andre). **Kept time**—the dull and monotonous regularity and the clumsy movement of his large hand were not surpassed even by the mechanical steps of the famous French dancing master of the time, as Shadwell flourished the roll of papers to direct the band of musicians.

Note—Notice how Dryden castigates the want of metrical sense in Shadwell in his usual manner of a cool

and ill-honoured scorn which contrasts sharply to the incredibly scurrilous libel of the latter. Here the point of comparison as between St. Andre and Shadwell is this : mechanical regularity is a distinctive feature of an expert dancing master but it is the besetting sin of a poetaster and writer of wretched doggerel or slipshod and unpoetic verse

54 **Not even...rhyme**—the dull clumsy and mechanical regularity with which you waved the roll of papers (manuscript) in your large hand was not even equalled by the execrable versification of your rhymed opera *Psyche* (produced in 1675) **thy...rhyme**—your own rhymed opera. Dryden is undoubtedly just in this reference to the execrable and really wretched versification of Shadwell's opera. Shadwell himself apologised for his errors on the excuse that he had to do the job in the short space of five weeks but at the same time he affected a disdain for the cruggy barren territories of rhyme. 55 **though.....excel**—although the verses are excellent both in point of *music* as well as in *sense*. This is *ironical* for “though the rhyming is execrable and the sense is equally worthless”. **They**—the feet of *Psyche's* rhyme *i. e.* the verses. 56 **So just**—so very regular. **So like tautology**—as one can expect from the pen of “the last great Prophet of *tautology*” who distinguished himself by his careless jumble of words and phrases that add nothing to the sense in all his poems and dramas. **They fell**—as you waved the roll of papers (manuscript) in your hand up and down to direct the band, it seemed that the manner of moving them was as mechanical and monotonous as the foolish and senseless repetition of words and phrases in your writings. 57 **Pale with envy**—envious of your success. **Singleton**—a famous musician of the day and leader of private band. Samuel Pepys (1638-1703), the famous Diarist, who gave an account of contemporary every day life in his “Diary” mentions how once in 1660 the king “did put a great affront upon his music play.” Singleton, as an actor, played the part of Villerius. Grand Master of the knights of Malta, in Sir W. D. Avenant's

dramatic opera, *Siege of Rhodes*. He (D'Avenant practically founded english opera by this dramatic composition. With Dryden and others he is satirised in the "*Rehearsal*" D'Avenant makes Villerius a heroic character,—also a lover and musician: Buckingham in his burlesque '*The Rehearsal*' ridicules this in a lyrical dialogue between Villerius and Solyman as a combination of 'lute and sword': In this scene Villerius appears with a sword in one hand and a lute in the other, thereby symbolising the ridiculous and rather incongruous combination of military and musical accomplishments in one and the same person. What Dryden means in this. Singleton (the comic actor and bandmaster of the king's private band) turned pale in envy at the mechanical regularity with which Shadwell flourish the roll of papers in his band while giving directions to his band of musicians and swore that he would never play the part of Villerius, because Shadwell's "*Psyche*" had really thrown all other operas into the shade. As a bandmaster's monotonous performance was nonsensical and to his poetic efforts the less said the better for both the versification and the sense were simply execrable. **for-swore**—gave up on oath 58 **The lute and sword etc**—Villerius (The heroic character the lover and musician in Davenant's opera) appeared on the stage with a sword in one hand and a lute in the other. See "Note" above. 59 **And vowed... more**—See note above. 60 **Sire**—Flecknoe 61 **In silent... Joy**—Flecknoe burst out into a parental rapture, proud of his progeny (Shadwell) and wept for joy being unable to express his emotion at the immense possibilities of the poetic capacity of his son. 62 **all arguments**—many tangible proofs of his stupidity are to be found in everything that came out of his pen. **Most**—above everything else his *plays etc.* the dullness of his dramatic efforts asserts his chief claim to the occupation of throne of dullness. 63 **for anointed.....made**—He was born to rule as the prince of dullness. 'Anoint' means apply holy oil as a part of a

religious ceremony on consecration as king. Anointing is the religious ceremony of pouring holy oil on the foreheads of kings (and priests) at the time of their coronation. **he was made**—nature herself ordained that he should rule as the prince of dullness.

Substance—// 64-89. A description of the site and the place of coronation of Shadwell.

The site chosen for Shadwell's coronation was a most disreputable quarter in the suburbs of London. It was just outside the walls of old London in ancient times. Here once stood a small round watch-tower which had fallen into ruins. Latterly, there rose in this site many brothels kept by prostitutes. In this quarter which had a bad character, was put up a structure which came to be used as a theatre for the training of young actors and actresses for the stage. Here future heroes and heroines practised their arts. The former learnt to play their parts in bombastic language while the latter practised their roles as heroines in their soft gentle voices in that theatre. But none of the great tragedies of Fletcher nor the great comedies of Ben Jonson were rehearsed here. Only the wretched, non sensical and metrically execrable interludes, and dramas of poetasters and punsters like Panton and his lot, were taken up here. This nursery theatre used to be visited by cobblers and low class people who were unable to appreciate anything better. Flecknoe fixed his choice on this great resort of wits as an ideal spot for the coronation of his son and set up a throne for him the ancient Elizabethan dramatist. Dekker who had known this quarter, had prophesied long ago that here would reign a great wit—a mighty praise who would wage perpetual war against wit—and sense in his stupid dramas in which would figure a host of absurd, vicious and uninteresting characters.

64 Walls—old walls of ancient London, surrounding it : **Fair Augusta**—the beautiful city of London, so designated in the reign of Theodosius. Augusta was a common name patronized by Augustus Caesar, the first

Roman Emperor. or founded or fortified by Romans in honour of the emperor who took the title of 'Augustus'. This title was first given by Augustus Caesar (The first Roman emperor) by the senate and the people in 27 B. C. to express their veneration for him. During the time of Roman occupation of Britain London was called 'Londinium Augusta'. This name was subsequently revived in the reign of Charles II whose courtiers used to flatter him and would often compare him to Augustus Caesar, 'from which the capital of his kingdom came to be called by the affected name of Augusta' (Hales). **Bind**—surround London was surrounded by a line of walls. 'Near the street called London Wall a considerable piece of them yet stands.' 65 **much.....inclined**—panic prevailed in old London owing to the Civil War, the plague, the fire, attacks of the Dutch, rumours of insurrection and consequential instability and insecurity of Government. A comparison is intended here between the insecurity of old Londoners with similar conditions in contemporary London in which Londoners were subjected to fits of hysterical panic Cf. Augusta is inclined to fears' in Crowne's "Masque of Calisto." Evidently this is an allusion to the apprehension of Londoners of the day caused by the political disturbances (J.C. Collins) 66 **ancient fabric**—old building put up as an imposing structure so as to **enable sentinels**—and guards to keep watch all round 67 **Barbican it high**—was or is called 'Carbican' *i. e.* a small round tower on the outer gate of the fort for the posting of an advanced guard. [—outer defence to castle esp. double tower on the gate (C. O. D.)] "Barbican was a street in Aldersgate on the side of Redcross street. Its name is derived from the low Latin *barbicana*, an outwork, through the French *barbacane*" (J.C. Collins) Barbican, was "the site of an old watch tower looking towards the south. The reference is to the advanced post of cripplegate from which a man might behold and view to whole city towards the south, and also into Kent, Sussey and Surrex, and likewise

every other way, east, north of west." (Stowe) **hight**—called." The sole instance in English of a passive verb. Cf. Shakespeare. "M. N. D." (V. I.) "This griestly beast which by name lion hights" and Dryden's version of the clock and the Fox (41,1) "The noble chanticleer so hight her cook." (Quoted by J. C. Collins) Cf. also Chaucer: Nun' Priest's Tale. 68 **So Fate ordains**—such is the decree of fate or destiny of all earthly things. Notice the mock heroic style in the manner of regular burlesque, a kind of literary parody of a derisively imitative character. 69. **Of all.....remains**—the huge structure survives only in the name of the street *i. e.* the place still happens to be called the Barbican, although the building itself has now disappeared altogether 70 **a nursery**—an institution which offers training to would be actors and actresses for the stage, established under "letters patent" (open letter from sovereign conferring some privilege *i. e.* sole right to make do something) in March, 1664, in Golden Lane Barbican. All obscene Scandalous or offensive passages were prohibited, and the performances were to be restricted to what may consist of harmless and inoffensive delights and recreations. Allusions to it are not uncommon among Dryden's contemporaries who sneered at its decorum. Thus in the Rehearsal (Act II. Sc. 2) Bayes says, "I am resolved hereafter to lend my thoughts wholly for the service of the Nursery. See too Oldham in his "Spenser's Ghost Satire".

"Then slighted by the very Nursery
Mayest thou at least be force'd to starve with me."

The site of one 'Nursery' was in Golden Lane Barbican, and to this Dryden refers ; but there was another institution known as the Nursery in Hatton Garden. See Lord Braybrook's Diary (vol. IV) Page 318. The lines where unfledged actors etc. are another parody from Cowley's Davider's Book I 75-6—

"Beneath the dens where unpledged tempests lie.
And infant minds their tender voices try."

(Quoted by J. C. C.)

erects its head—stands. **Note**—Dryden himself was sneered at by Buckingham (author of the burlesque 'The Rehearsal' a farcical comedy designed to satirise the heroic tragedies of the day and consisting of a series of parodies of passages from these, strung together in an absurd heroic plot—) as a poet worthy of the nursery. In this farcical comedy the character of Bayes, Dryden is made to say—"I am resolved hereafter to lead my thoughts wholly for the service of the Nursery." "The author of the mock play is evidently a laureate (hence his name Bayes). There are hits at Dryden (particularly his conquest of Granada) and his brothers in law, Edward and Robert Howard." (C. O. D) 71 **Queens**—heroines of dramas. **future heroes bred**—would be actors who are to play the parts of heroes. 72 **unfledged**—raw, immature (Literally it means 'unprovided with feathers,' hence a young bird or in experienced person) 73 **infant panks**—prostitutes of a tender age (archaic use) **their.....try**—play their future roles in soft and gentle voices. 74 **Little Maximins**—Maximin—the hero of Dryden's drama 'Tyrannic Love or The Royal Martyr.' Here it means 'young tragic heroes. **the good defy** —rant, declaim and use bombastic language and play their part noisily even to the length of defying the gods as Maximin, the Roman tyrant did in the scene in which he died. **Note** : Here Dryden is hitting at the ridiculous rant and bombast in which tragic heroes of other dramatists indulge in their dramas and fail to induce in the minds of the audience tragic emotion. 75 **Great Fletcher**—the famous John Fletcher (1579-1625), the coadjutor of Beaumont in the production of plays and one of the most distinguished of the Elizabethan dramatists. In his own day these plays were considered equal in merit to those of Shakespeare. In Charles V's time they were much more popular. Here Dryden refers to him in connection with tragic dramas.

Buskins—high heeled shoes usually worn by actors while acting tragedies and symbolising tragedies. But the chief fame of Beaumont and Fletcher lay in comedies. The sock or low-heeled light shoe was worn in comedy and so symbolized comedy. Cf. Gray: In buskin'd measures move' (Bard 128) Milton: If Jonson learned sock be on" (L Allegro 132) (Quoted by J. C. C.) High heeled shoes, used to be worn by ancient Greek tragic actors, gave them a high stature, consistent with their heroic parts. 76 **Greater Jonson**—Benjamin Jonson (Ben Jonson), famous for his comedies (e. g. Every Man in his Humour with Shakespeare in the cast). The greatest scholar and classicist of his age. The sock or low heeled light shoes, worn by comic actors, symbolises comedies. He followed the rules of classical art. For reasons of history special interest attaches to his satire of the puritans. He remains the great master of English satirical comedy on the Elizabethan stage. These are the reasons for Dryden's preference for them. 77 **Gentle Simkin**—"The character of a cobbler in an interlude" (a kind of farcical drama) "In a collection of Drolls and Farces compiled by Francis Kirkman in 1673, there is one called 'The Humours of Simpkin' Simpkin being a stupid clown who is represented as intriguing with an old man's wife." Derrick (Quoted by J. C. C. In the authority of P. A. Daniel) **Just.....finds**—is appropriately entertained and appreciated as people of low tastes are unable to appraise anything better. 78 **Monument.....minds**—the nursery is visitedly persons wish varnished minds *i. e.* who are idiots. This phrase is taken by Dryden from Davenant's Gondibert (IV. 36)

"Thus to a structure led, long known to fame
And call'd the monuments of vanish'd minds."

The phrase means—"This refuge of idiots whose intelligence has dwindled to nothing." 79 **Pure clinches**—pure puns (plays on words) which are virtually stupid use of the same word in different senses at the hands of wretched poetasters who seem to think that they are clever enough.

Suburban muse—wretched poetasters who are too poor to be able to live in fashionable parts of London and whose puns bear no suggestion of vulgarity. Dryden lived in the city and as such he would well afford to speak contemptuously of the suburban Muse, "Dryden in the "Essay on Satire" commenting on the pun made on Rex in Horace satire I, VII calls it "a miserable clinch in my opinion for Horace to record." (J. C. C.).

Note—The word suburban—modern suburban—out-lying district of city and away from the centre of business and fashion. Cf. Milton's use of robustions in Samson Agonistes Line 569. 80 **Panton**—"a celebrated punster of the day" (Derrick). **Waging...words**—making a stupid use of words in different senses with ludicrous effect. 81 **Here**—in the nursery. **As a place...well-known**—the place acquired some notoriety as the refuge to dullards 82 **ambitiously...throne**—prompted by ambition Flecknoe fixed his choice on this resort of dullards and wretched poetasters for setting up the throne for Shadwell's coronation. **Note**—The nursery is chosen as the site for the coronation of Shadwell, because Dryden wants to ridicule him in his dramatic capacity 83 **ancient Deckkar**—the good old Dekker, Elizabethan comic dramatist (1570-1632) whose writings vividly illustrate London life and manners e. g. "The shoemaker's Holiday," "The Honest," "The Witch of Edmonton" etc. His writings are marked by a sunny simplicity and sympathy for the poor and oppressed (including animals tortured for man's amusement) (C. O. D.) "As a city poet in the service of the Corporation, his duty was to arrange for puppet-shows and to compose poems specially for festive occasions for the amusement and entertainment of common people. Dryden is not justified for this contemptuous reference as a poet presaging the coming of Shadwell in a latter generation. **Prophesied...long since**—The reference is to Dekker's prose pamphlets ("The Seven Deadly Sins of London") some of which satirise the sins of a city which he had made a special and profound study. He did for the London of the 17th

century what Dickens did for the London of the nineteenth century. In these pamphlets Dekker attacks the fops and gallants of the day under the guise of ironical instructions." The prophecy referred to here is perhaps Dryden's own invention and can only be attributed to his prejudice against Dekker for crossing swords with Ben Jonson who was believed to have satirised Dekker in his *Poetaster* to which Dekker replied in "*Satiromastrix*" (see Chap. VII).

84 **This pile**—the Nursery; a **mighty prince**—a prince among dullards (spoken ironically). 85 a **scourge**.....sense—endowed by nature for the purpose of waging a relentless war against wit and sense. **Note**—The word flail literally 'means a hand implement or staff' used for thrashing corn. Here it means 'a castigator of good sense'. 86 **To whom...owe**—to whom dullards should be under an obligation for writing nonsensical operas like '*Psyche*,' a rhymed opera by Shadwell. 87 **But worlds of...flow**—but he should write a host dull dramas like the *Miser* etc. The reference is to Shadwell's adaptation of Moliere's *L'Avare* under the title of *The Miser*. 88 "**Humourists**" etc—dramas written by Shadwell. "The second ("*Hypocrites*") would seem to refer to some adaptation of Moliere's '*Tartuffe*.' (J. C. C.) According to another commentator, Scott, it is not the name of a drama but the hypocritical chaplain's character in Shadwell's *Lancashire Witches*. Scott conjectures that it may refer to the Irish priest and Tory chaplain in the *Lancashire Witches* who is, by the way, again introduced in the '*Amorous Bigot*.' Christie (another commentator) is of opinion that the plural 'hypocrites' should be taken to refer generally to the many dramatic persons, introduced by Shadwell, who were fops and gallants and hypocritically pretended to be virtuous. 89 **Whole Raymond**.....**Bruce**—numerous characters of the type of Raymond in Shadwell's the *Humorists* and Bruce in *Tirtuoso*. The former is a 'gentleman of wit and humour' and the latter 'a gentleman of wit and sense'. (J.C.C.)

Substance—90-132. The Coronation of Shadwell.

By this time the rumour about the coming coronation had spread far and wide ; a vast multitude of dullards from the suburbs of London mustered strong at the place of coronation to witness the ceremony. The path i. e. the approach road leading to the throne along which the prince of Dulness and his aged father were to pass was covered not by a Persian carpet but by the force and loose fragments of the works of worthless poets and dramatists, particularly of those of Shadwell himself. The guard of honour was formed by booksellers cheated out of their dues, headed by their captain the publisher Herringman. Good old Flecknoe was seated high on a throne made of pile of his own books while at his right hand sat the crown prince, Shadwell,—the hope of all dullards of London. A mist-like darkness caused by dullness covered the face of the crown-prince. Round about his head the darkness arising out of bleak stupidity of his brain, seemed almost visible. The prince now took the solemn oath of waging a life long war with wit and good sense. After oath-taking ceremony old Flecknoe, who combined in his person the duties of the king and the priests, annointed his son with holy oil. Then he placed in his left hand a mug of ale, instead of the ball while in his right hand he held a copy of 'Love's Kingdom'—a typical product of his literary genius instead of the usual sceptre, in order that his son might derive inspiration for producing his stupid works. A chaplet of poppies was then encircled round his head, instead of the crown, in order to sanctify his dull head. Just at that moment twelve owls flew over the sport, presaging his high destiny as absolute sovereign in the kingdom of dulness. Then the crowning act of blessing his son was performed by the aged father amidst deafening cheers from the admiring crowd. As the old father shook his head in approbation, liquid drops of dull forgetfulness fell from his aged brow on the dull head of his son.

THE CORONATION

90 **empress Fame**—goddess of rumour, report who rules supreme. **Renown**—report. 92 **roused**—attracted. **report of fame**—news spread by rumour. **patrons**—the heterogeneous population of London i.e. people living in the suburbs of London who were mainly dull poetasters 93 **Near—Burnhill****street**—Burnhill is in the Finsbury district of London in the northern suburbs (part of this was a burial ground) while Watling Street is a vast old Roman Road of South Britain. **near and distant**—from far and near. 94 **No Persian**.....**way**—As is customary at the time of coronation the approach road leading to the throne is usually covered with Persian carpets. 95 **Scattered**.....**lay**—the passage in and through the spectators seated on both sides was covered with mutilated remains—torn limos, loose and tattered pages of the stupid writings of wretched and neglected poetasters. 96 **Minch Heywood**.....**lay there**—the way to the throne of Dulness was covered with mutilated works of dull poets and dramatists like Heywood etc. **Heywood**—Thomas Heywood (d 1650 ?) dramatist whose chief strength lay in the field of domestic drama who had either an entire hand or at least a finger in 220 plays". See note on L 29 above. **Shirley**—see note on L 29 above **Ogleby**—John (1600-76) dancing master and poetaster. He published a translation of Virgil, the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, which as a boy, Pope admired, but in his mature years he pronounced it to be beneath criticism. La the *Dunciad* (Book I, L 41) he is called "Ogleby the great." (J. C. C.) Cf. "Here swells the shelf with Ogleby the great. 97 **loads of Shadwell**—heaps of unreadable and silly writings blocked the path, meaning thereby that no writings were indeed more neglected than those that had come out of Shadwell's brain. 98 **bilked**.....**yeomen**—booksellers cheated out of their legitimate dues, formed the Guard of Honour instead of yeomen or peasants. Yeomen were members of the sovereign's bodyguard and personal retinue. Notice the *ludicrous humour* in the two suggestions : (1) It is

only by treading on the mutilated works of neglected authors that Shadwell might imbibe a greater degree of dullness. (2) Instead of the customary "Yeomen of the Guard" forming the king's personal retinue, booksellers and publishers who had lost a lot of money by publishing the works of poetasters formed the guard of honour. Shadwell was actually cursed by all broken stationers according to the testimony of Oldham. 99 **Herringman**—Henry Herringman, the publisher. Dryden worked for him when he came to London. "Herringman continued to publish for him till Tonson became his publisher. He chiefly published poetry and plays—hence his place here" (J. C. C.) 100 **The hoary ... appeared**—The venerable grey headed Flecknoe then put in an appearance at the head of a procession. 101 **a throne.....reared**—seated prominently on a throne made up of his own books—monuments of his dullness. Cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, II

"High on a throne that far outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind"

102. **Our young Ascanius**—Shadwell, the crown prince who was to old Flecknoe what Ascanius was to Aeneas the hero of Virgil's the *Aeneid*, which recounts the hero of Virgil's epic, the *Aeneid*, which recounts the adventures of Aeneas from the fall of Troy. He was the mythical founder of Rome. 103. **Rome's other hope**—i. e. Shadwell. Flecknoe was the hope of dullards and in his absence Shadwell. Flecknoe was his second or other hope. The first hope of Rome was the legendary founder, Aeneas and the second hope was his worthy son, Ascanius. Notice the epic style (Other hope) which heightens the ludicrousness of the description of the majestic dullness of the crown prince. **Pillar of the state**—Chief support of the empire of dullness. Cf. Milton—

"With grave aspect he rose
And in his rising *seemed* a pillar of state."

Paradise Lost, II.

Note : Here again the use of these expressions from epics (*Aeneid* of Virgil, *Paradise Lost* of Milton—long poems of a heroic age and of heroic personages of history or tradition) illustrates the basic mock-heroic nature of *Mac Flecknoe* and the highly dignified and grandiloquent style of writing, employed in such burlesques of the epic or tragic manner of writing. Cf. famous examples in literature like Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (in which trivial incidents are invested with the epic manner of writing with a view to bringing out the ludicrousness of the whole affair) 104-5 **His brows.....face**—This is also described in the proper Virgilian manner with which the Latin poet describes the fiery halo over the head of Iolus (Cf. *Aeneid* II 680-686); also Keats in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, where he describes Madeline in sleep.

“And on her hair a glory, like a saint.” Instead of a halo of glory (disc of light round the head of a saint or god or goddess—) the forehead of Shadwell was enveloped with a kind of misty darkness, an indication of his intellectual darkness or stupidity of his brain. **Grace**—adorn. 105. **Lambent**—softly radiant (literally of flame or light playing about the eye or face (P. O. D.) **Lambent.....face**—the dulness was expressed in the form of a dark mist issuing out of his brain and playing about the face. Here is another example of the *mock-heroic* manner of Dryden. This is reminiscent of the halo of light round about the face of Iolus (Cf. Virgil's *Aeneid* II)

106-111 Description of the actual coronation ceremony.

106. **Hannibal**—Carthaginian general, son of Hamilcar. He was only 9 years old when his father took him with him to the war fields of Spain and made him swear eternal hostility to Rome. Child as he then was, Hannibal never forgot his vow, and his whole life was one continual struggle against Rome, but he was ultimately defeated. **Altars**—temple. 107 **Sire**—father, Hamilcar. **a mortal foe**—deadly enemy 108-9 **nor should.....maintain**—like Hannibal,

Shadwell's oath to pledge eternal hostility to sense was not meant to be violated. He did remain a wretched dullard all his life. "Hannibal remained unshaken to the last by any change of fortune for a period of more than 50 years and it was only when he saw that fight was impossible, that he took poison to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies about the year 183 B. C. (S. C. D.) **True**..... **maintain**—would always support the cause of true dullness. 110. **in his****right**—by virtue of the legitimate claim which has been transmitted to him by his father to support the cause of dulness. **Realm's defence**—in preserving the empire of dulness. 111 **Ne'er**.....**sense**—never for a moment would he care to ally himself with those who write sensible things. Like Hannibal he has bound himself by an oath to wage incessant war with wit and to have no truck with intelligent writings. **truce**—suspension of hostility. 112-113. Description of the *anointing ceremony*. 112 **the King**.....**made**—Elecknoe himself performed the anointing ceremony, which is an indispensable feature of the coronation when the prince's forehead is anointed with the holy oil. **unction**—thing used in anointing as part of a religious ceremony on consecration as king. 113 **as king** ...**trade**—Flecknoe was a R. C. Irish priest. So by virtue of his position as king and his profession (that of a priest) he was entitled to anoint a king. 114. **sinister**—left ball—The ball is symbolical of world dominion and is placed in the left hand of the prince at coronation. 115 **a mighty****ale**—Instead of placing the ball in the Prince's left hand is customary at coronation, a big mug (drinking pot) containing some intoxicating drink was given. 116. "**Love's Kingom**"—an extremely dull and stupid pastoral tragic-comedy by Flecknoe.

Comment : Note that Shadwell's drunkenness was a fact which was satirised by Dryden in the character of 'Og' in his *Absalom and Achitophel*:

"Round as a globe, liquored every chink
Goodly and great he sails behind his link."

Hence to ridicule Shadwell, Dryden places a mighty mug of potent ale instead of the customary ball—the regal emblem symbolising world dominion. Again, as a substitute for the sceptre symbolical of the exercise of his authority over the kingdom of Dulness, Dryden places in his (Prince Shadwell's) right hand a copy of Flecknoe's extremely dull pastoral tragi-comedy ("Love's Kingdom") by way of a standard by which he was to wield his power and influence over dulness and a modle of dull writing. 117 **At once sway**—the insignia or the mark of his royal office and authority and his code of rule. 118 **Whose i. e. of (*Love's Kingdom*) righteous-role**—noble precepts or maxims (ironical for 'foolish thoughts') **whose young**—the son (Shadwell) had imbibed the father's nonsensical way of writing and had followed his precepts while yet young by writing his *Psyche*. **Note**—How subtly Dryden insinuates that Shadwell's earlier writings were all written in the paternal vein and lined descendents of Flecknoe's "*Love's Kingdom*" 119 **from whose loins**—from whose body as a father. **recorded**—the above mentioned. **spring-born** out of direct inspiration from Flecknoe's *Love's Kingdom*, just as a son is born out of the loins of the father. The phrase *spring from one's loins* means "*begotten by him*" 120 **temples**—part of the head between forehead and either ear. **last**—last of all; **his temples o'erspread**—his forehead was encircled by a chaplet of poppy leaves and flowers. 'Poppy' is a kind of plant noted for bright flowers as yielding opium. It is associated with dulness, drowsiness induced by the narcotic. Shadwell was believed to have died from an overdose of opium. Dryden crowns Shadwell's head with a chaplet of poppies instead of the usual laurel to ridicule him. It is appropriate that poet of dulness should be so crowned with the narcotic poppy. 121 **nodding**-waving in that breeze **seemed.....head**—appeared to impart to his head a kind of kingly sanctity **consecrate**—sanctify, to make sacred. 12 **Just time**—exactly when Flecknoe placed the chaplet of poppies on Shadwell's head. **If fame...lie**—if the report be not false.

123 **reverend-aged**, venerable, solemn-looking owls—associated with solemnity, darkness or evil (as omen) 124 **Romulus**—the legendary founder of Rome. When he and his twin-brother Romus, determined to found a city on the bank of the Tiber, the omens indicated by the flight of 12 vultures gave the preference to Romulus, as Romus was encouraged only by a flight of six vultures, and Romulus began the foundations of the city of Rome. The omen (Vultures) indicate that Rome would forge out into a warlike state a likewise Shadwell's owls indicated an augury of a regime of dulness. **Tiber's brook**—by the side of the river Tiber, on whose bank the city of Rome was founded. 125 **Presage...took**—prophecy of rule over the new city of Rome and an indication of the future greatness of his power over the kingdom 126 **The admiring...** make-defeaning shouts of joy were set up by the admiring crowd, at the sight of 12 grave and solemn looking owls prognosticating the future greatness of his power over the empire the crowd regarding the flight of 12 owls as a thing of prophetic significance, portending absolute rule of stupidity and dulness. in the world of letters 127 **Omen**—indication 128 **Shook...head**-waved his venerable head silvered over with age *i. e.* the mass of his grey hair 129-30 **And...dulness**—Flecknoe dropped from his fore-head bead of inspiration (damps of oblivion *i. e.* drops or dews of forgetfulness in liquid form, as the father (Elecknoe) fixed a vagant gaze on his dull son (Shadwell) 130 **full...dulness**—lowering over his son's head Flecknoe looked venerable as he waved his silver grey hair while drops of liquid forgetfulness fell in full quantity direct over head of his dull son (Shadwell).

Note—Flecknoe himself was a dull worthless dramatist. He was lampooned by Andrew Marvell (1645) which suggested to Dryden his satire on Shadwell (Mac Elecknoe). He was damned to oblivion even in his life time. So Dryden here fancies that Flecknoe's forehead is bedewed with drops of oblivion (*Cf.* beads of inspiration) in liquid

form, which now fall direct on the head of his dullard son (Shadwell). Note that but for Dryden's lampoons on Shadwell (both in his *Absalom and Achitophel* in the character of 'Og' and in *Mac Flecknoe*) and *Flecknoe*, none of them would be known to the literary world today. Cf. "Flecknoe, whom but for this work no one would ever have inquired about, was had been for some tune stock subject for allusive satire." (Saintsbury) John Dryden Page 87) Cf. also 'Absalom and Achitophel' about Dryden's prophecy in regard to Settle and Shadwell.

"Who by my Muse, to all succeeding times,
Shall live in spite of their doggerel rhymes"

131 **Repelling.....God**—making a desperate and heroic effort to overcome his *dullness*, the god that was raging within him, which he was trying to bring under his control, before he was to burst into a speech full of creative self expression.

Comment—Notice the somewhat *epic manner* in which Flecknoe is struggling to bring under control the god of dullness, raging within his breast in order to frame his thoughts into a speech. Cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I "Thrice he assayed to speak and thrice." 132 **burst...mood**—Inspired by the emotions of moment, Flecknoe poured forth into the following speech which foretold the future glory of Shadwell reigning in undisputed authority over the kingdom of dullness.

Note—According to *classical convention* poets required some kind of divine afflatus or inspiration before bursting into a creative utterance.

Substance 133-202 Flecknoe's Prophecy and Benediction.

Flecknoe now invoked the blessing of God on his son, so he, in a prophetic mood, prayed that it might please him to reign over the entire watery region from Ireland to the end of the Atlantic and to make his son's throne greater than his father's so that he might write far worse stuff than his father's "Love's Kingdom".

Flecknoe now began to detail the great future of his son in these terms : May his son's ignorance and impudence increase more and more. May he labour in vain for long and yet produce nothing like the proverbial mountain in labour. Let him vainly amulate the example of writers like Etherage whose fools and fogs have at least the merit, of revealing the writer's wit ingenuity for Shadwell's fools serving only to illustrate his stupidity and lack of imaginative capacity. Let him not seek any foreign aid but let all his characters be cast in his own image so that they may be incarnation, (embodiments in flesh and blood) of stupidity like himself. Let him not seek the help of Sedley to improve his own dull drama nor steal from him or from other their rhetorics which comes naturally to him. Rant and bombast are his special forte and his native talents in this regard are sufficient to make his style ludicrously pompous inflated and disgusting. So it is up to him not to be misled by love of notoriety into imitating Ben Jonson who was a great comic genius. There cannot be the least ground for bringing a charge of plagiarism against Ben Jonson in regard to certain scenes in Fletcher, but Shadwell himself could very well be charged for committing literary theft in regard to Etherege, which is all too apparent as Shadwell does not have the intellectual capacity for adaptation : Shadwell's dramas display a new kind of humour viz., the humour of being stupid. Shadwell must not imagine that because he shares with Ben Jonson his physical bulk, he resembles Ben Jonson in other respects also. Though physically formidable, Shadwell is intellectually negligible. His tragedies amuse while his comedies produce a kind of soporific effect. His satires never hurt, though his heart is full of venom. He would do well if he confined his efforts to a harmless exercise of making emagrams and acrostics and to setting his own songs to tune and to singing them. -133 **Heavens—God. From Ireland—** Ireland is mentioned because Flecknoe was an Irish priest

and his homeland is Ireland. It is therefore, appropriate that Flecknoe's empire should coincide with that of Shadwell by right of succession. 134. **Barbadoes**—the British West Indies. **Western main**—Atlantic ocean. **Free Ireland****main**—The whole area from Ireland to the end of the Atlantic Ocean covers a vast stretch of water despoiled of human habitations will indeed be a fit place for the dullard Shadwell to rule over. 136 **And greater**.....**throne**—May Shadwell's fame as a dull writer exceed that of his father. 137 **Beyond**.....**pen**—let Shadwell continue to write plays for surpassing his father's nonsensical drama *viz.*, "Love's Kingdom" in point of dulness. 138 **Amen**—Be it so. **He paused**—this is the regular epic style burlesqued by Dryden. 140 **still**—always. **In new**.....**ignorance**—let Shadwell beat his previous record in point of shamelessness ever breaking new grounds and ignorance. *Cf.* Tennyson : for a prayer of an opposite character :

"Let knowledge grow from more to more
But more of reverence in Shadwell.

141. **Success teach**—Having lamentably failed to attain success in the field of letters, even though he has written dramas for more than 50 years, he is ill-fitted to advise his son in this art. 142 : **Pangs**.....**industry**—Flecknoe is in a position to teach the great lesson of a life time *viz.*, futile travail for poetic fame and painful labour over a long period but producing nothing like the proverbial mouse coming out of the mountain in labour. 143 **Let Virtuosos etc**—Virtuoso is worthless drama which Shadwell took 5 years to write and yet in the prologue he apologised for his lapses for shortness of time to meet the demand of the publishers. 144 **Yet not one**.....**wit**—It will not have the slightest trace of merit even though you took 5 long years to write it out. It would on the contrary, be so dull that there would hardly be in it a single idea or thought which might be termed sensible by any stretch of the imagination.

Note—"The point here is that Shadwell is taunted with having taken five years to write a play which he pretended he had been obliged to hurry out. In the prologue to the "Virtuoso" he complains that authors cannot do justice to themselves because they have no time—

"Now drudges of the stage must often appear
They must be found to scribble twice a year."

(Quoted by J.C.C.)

145 **gentle George**—"Sir George Etherege the wit, poet and dramatist author of "*The Comical Revenge*" or "*Love in a Tub*" "*She would if she could*" and "*the Man of Mode*" or *Sir Fopling Flutter*—all his plays were very successful" (J. C. C.). "The comic underplot of prose in his *the Comical Revenge*" with its lively realistic scenes, was as Gosse has pointed out, the foundation of the English comedy of Congreve, Goldsmith and Sheridan. In this Etherege drew inspiration from Moliere" (C. O. D.) He is called 'gentle' by Dryden because he did not choose to reply to Shadwell when the latter lampooned him. **In triumph.....stage**—won applause from the audience when his dramas were successfully received and acted upon the stage and also by the public. **Make rage**—*Dorimant* is a witty libertine in Etherege's *The Man of Mode*. The original of this character was said to be the Earl of Rochester. *Lovert* and *Fopling* are also characters in the same play. *Cutty* and *Coopwood* are also characters in '*Love in a Tub*'. All these are fops or men of fashion made ridiculous for their gallantry and roguery. Etherege himself was a man of fashion *Dorimant* himself is a licentious character who *betrayed* women *Loveit* indulged in rant or bombastic language when under the influence of passion. 147. **Charm the pit**—give delight to common people who occupy seats in the—pit-floor of theatre auditorium behind stalls. 148 **in their folly...wit**—Dryden is here paying a compliment to the dramatist Etherege who leant to catch the atmosphere of the times "To shoot folly as it flies. And catch the manners living

as they rise." Etherage is credited with having written "The pattern of genteel comedy" in which respect he was the fore-runner of Congreve, Goldsmith and Sheridan. Etherage proves his comic genius by inventing characters whose follies and witticisms which atonce drew the attention of the audience e. g. "Dorimant is a credible, memorable and at the same time a highly disagreeable figure" (*Boris Ford: From Dryden to Johnson*, Page 163) 149-50

Yet still.....sense—while it is true to say that the fools of other dramatists reveal their writer's ingenuity, wit and good sense, the fools of Shadwell only bring out their author's stupidity as the latter are dull persons without the saving grace of the humour and rascality of Sir John Falstaff. Dryden thought Etherage the undoubted best author of prose in English. 151 **Let them...made**—Let all your characters be conceived and designed after your pattern i.e.—let them be incarnations of incorrigible foolishness like yourself. 152 **desire.....aid**—Let these characters be painted so dull that they are incapable of being improved upon even if they are engrafted on foreign models. 153 **that**—so that. 154 **Not copies.....own**—so that in future ages they may be known not as mere portraits or representation of actual characters but as your own progeny—chips of the old block (children representing their parent in every particular). 155 **Nay**—besides *men of wit*—your so called witty characters. **be the Same**—as dull and silly as the foolish characters. 156 **all full of thee etc**—as foolish as yourself and be just like you though differing only in *name* and not in essential characters (a difference without any distinction as between Tweedle dum and tweedle dee). 157 **Alien Sedley**—As Sir Charles Sedley's witticism is foreign to your genius (i. e. as he is as witty as Shadwell is stupid) do not allow him to come to your help "Sir Charles Sedley. the profligate but accomplished wit, dramatist and minor poet, was intimately acquainted with Dryden (who introduces him as one of the interlocutors in *the Essay on Dramatic Poesy*) Sir Charles had written the Prologue to Shadwell's play,

Epsom Wells in which he thanks him for his assistance in correction and alteration. This was not the first time that charges of plagiarism had been brought against Shadwell." (J. C. C.) The reference is to the fact that Sedley wrote the prologue to *Shadwell's Epsom Wells* and that Shadwell acknowledged this help as well as some corrections and improvements made by Sedley. Dryden utilises this basis of his satire on these two facts.

That Shadwell was a plagiarist will be borne out by this quotation from *Dramatic Poets* (page 443): "I cannot wholly acquit our present laureate from borrowing; his plagiarisms being in some places too bold and open to be disguised." (quoted by J. C. C.)

Comment. Notice how cleverly spins his satire out of this very *slender factual foundation* to base his charge of plagiarism, which makes it so difficult for Shadwell to disprove. Dryden's facts are rarely disputable there never perhaps was a satirist. Who less abused his power for personal ends. Compared with Dryden's Shadwell's satire is incredibly scurrilous libel.

158. **to land with wit**—mix Shadwell's dull writings with wit—from Sedley so as to make them presentable **hungry Epsom prose**—dull prosaic writings utterly devoid of wit, like the prose of Shadwell's "Epsom Wells". See Notes above 159. **False.....cull**—indiscriminate use of rhetorical ornaments, comes naturally to you so you need not go out of your way to steal these things from others, for your own style is ludicrously pompous, stilted and stupid. 160. **Trust...dull**—Shadwell's native endowment gives him the capacity to misuse rhetorical ornaments most inappropriately and ineffectively. It emanates from his stupid brain. So Shadwell need not take pains to steal from others what he cannot use with the best effect. 161 **top**—excel. **write thy... top**—All that Shadwell needs to do is to follow his natural genius for using unsuitable rhetorical ornaments in which he is sure to excel others. 162 **Sir Formal's oratory**—the stilted and verbose style of Sir Formal Trifle, a pompous

fool in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*, whose language is in accordance with his character. 163 **though unsought**—naturally unsolicited. **attends**.....**quill**—stilted ; pompous and verbose and his expression is trivial in contest. It takes colour from his own creation—Sir Formal Trifle notorious for ridiculous bombast in his style and inappropriate ornaments spoilt by misuse in his speeches.

Notes—It is the lack of wit and indiscriminate employment of rhetorical ornaments which Dryden is satirising here in a spirit of contemptuous humour. Compared with the companion picture of Og in *Absalom and Achitophel*. It will be seen that in *Mac Flecknoe* Dryden sank the greater part of his rancour in the humour of the conception and the reader enjoys the fun *without thinking much of its application to an individual*. He laughs in pure amusement and only with an effort realises what it meant to the subject of the satire.

164 Northern dedications—The reference is to Shadwell's frequent dedications to the Duke of Newcastle and member of his family. Newcastle is to the north of England hence *northern*. "Churton Collins speaks of no fewer than six dedications four to the Duke himself, one to the duchess, and one to Lord Ogle, the Duke's son, all these were written very much in the style of Sir Formal. In the *Vindication of the Duke of Guise* Dryden again refers to Shadwell as the northern dedicator of Scott be not correct in reading dictator." (J. C. C.)

164 And.....**feel**—the style of your dedication is very much like the highly stilted florid and bombastic style of Sir Formal Trifle. 165 **Nor let**.....**fame**—do not make an unseemly and indecorous bid for winning cheap popularity or notoriety by emulating the example of Ben Jonson and claiming him as your master and model.

Note : Like Ben Jonson, Shadwell wrote what is called "Comedies of Manners" e. g. his "Epsom Wells" and "Busy

Fair" do give interesting pictures of contemporary manners. "Shadwell was at open feud with Dryden from 1612, the quarrel arising out of some qualified phrase bestowed by the latter on Ben Jonson. The two poets repeatedly attacked one another in satires, among which were Dryden's "Medal" and "Mac Elecknoe" and Shadwell's "The Medal of John Bayes" and a translation of the "*Tenth Satire of Juvenal*" (C. O. D.)

It is a fact that Shadwell was never tired of declaring himself as a disciple of Ben Jonson. In the preface to **The Virtuoso**—for instance, Shadwell calls "incomparably the best dramatic poet that ever was or I believe, ever will be, adding, "I had rather be author of some one scene in his comedies than of any play that this age has produced." Also in the Epilogue to "*The Humourists*" he says of Ben Jonson in these terms"—

"But to out-go all other men would be
O noble Ben, less than to follow thee."

There was much in common between Jonson and Shadwell. Both illustrated in their plays what is called in "humours" is harmless and laudible in just proportions but becomes food for satire when a specific 'humour' dominates the whole man. Ben Jonson was the first to introduce the humour comedy and comedy of manners. Shadwell was also a 'Humorist' in the old sense of caricaturist, owing debts to Moliere and to Jonson 'whom I think all dramatic poets ought to imitate' (*The Sullen Lovers*, preface). Both Shadwell and Ben Jonson frequented the tavern and both were corpulent. 166. **By arrogating name**—claiming rather foolishly or pretending to claim the merit of the comic genius (Ben Jonson) which is the very antithesis of Shadwell's caricature. Note : Here *humour* means a particular bias or bent of mind with which Ben Jonson's comedies deal e. g. his *Volpone* represents the humour or greed for money, his *Epicene* the humour of a man who cannot stand the slightest noise. Jonson's satire is directed against those in whom this dominant quality (Humour)

overtops everything else. 167 **Let...praise**—Rather, you should be better advised to follow and emulate the example of your father Flecknoe, whose dullness is akin to your genius as a wretched caricaturist. 167 **And uncle Ogleby.....raise**—the reference is to John Ogleby of Edinburgh a poor poetaster who translated Virgil, Aesop and Homer intellectual brother of Flecknoe and hence 'uncle' to Shadwell, a kinsman in dulness. 168 **Thou art my blood**—you are bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh my progeny in dullness. My genius has not got the least similarity to that of Jonson 170 **What share.....wit**—there is no common factor either in nature or art between us (Flecknoe and Jonson)—either in natural endorsement or in acquired characteristics. 170-**Where did understand?**—Did Ben Jonson ever stoop so low as to attack learned men of the day or ridicule the art of dramatic composition as you did without properly understanding what the 'arts' means?

Note—Notice the sarcasm which consists in making the incapacity to appreciate learning or arts a merit in Shadwell. Dryden has in mind the scurrilous attack of Shadwell in his *The Medal of John Bayes and the Rehearsal* of Buckingham with whom he collaborated. **Brand**—stigma of inferiority ; stigmatize men of learning. 172 **rail-understand**—use abusive language and criticise maliciously literary artists or the nature of dramatic composition. 173 **Prince Nicander's vein**—The reference is to the ridiculous love scene as between Prince Nicander romantic gallant and Psyche in the first Act of your Opera '*Psyche*'. **Vein**—manner. **Or swept strain?**—By no stretch of the imagination could Ben Jonson (the originator of "humour" comedy and comedy of manners) conceive of making the heroine of any of his play perform the menial function of sweeping the dust of the room in the ridiculous manner in which Shadwell made his Psyche do it. **Strain**—manner. 174 **His Muse**—Jonson's comic genius. In Greek mythology the 'Muses' are nine sister goddesses

to whom inspiration in poetry was attributed. Here the goddess of comedy is meant. **Purlion**—pilfer **Fletcher**—the dramatist, a contemporary of Jonson who cannot be charged with plagiarism in respect of certain scenes from Fletcher. 175 **As thou.....thine ?**—Surely Jonson could not be capable of bodily removing scenes as you did from Etherage and trying to pass them as your own. **transfume**—transfer 176 **But so...flow**—Shadwell commits literary theft so shamelessly in respect of certain scenes from Sir George Etherege that it becomes very easy to distinguish such borrowings from his own silly writings, just as oil poured into water, floats on the surface. 177 **His always...below** so clumsy is Shadwell's borrowing that they can be easily distinguished from his own compositions. This distinction is clearly perceptible to all. Etherage's scenes being fresh sparkling in wit, as against vapid and dull compositions. 179 **This...way**—this is your forte—your speciality or capacity which indicates the wonderful manner in which your genius works. 180 **New honour's**—The reference is to a passage in the dedication of the "*Virtuoso*" "Four of the Humours are entirely new and (without vanity) I may say I ne'er produced a comedy that had not some natural humour in it, not represented before and I hope I never shall" (J. C. C.).

Note—A humour is a personification of some individual passion or propensity underlying Ben Jonson's comedy of humours (the type of comic drama initiated by him—If this special quality is present in its proper proportion and just relation to other qualities of personality then it is harmless. When this is exceeded, and dominates the whole man, then it becomes the object of satire. This is the basic conception of the comedy of manners which Jonson originated. Shadwell also considered himself to be the best "humourist" but he may be called so in the old sense of *caricaturists*, owing debts to Moliere and Jonson. See also notes above. According to mediaeval medical beliefs a man's character is determined by the proportion

of 'humours' in the body. 181 **This**—"that you invent new humours for each play "**Boasted**—much vaunted. **bias**—inclination of the mind. 182 **By which**.....**inclined** your bent of mind inclines on one side viz that of dullness. 183 **which still**—it is this bias or inclination of your mind or dominant characteristic which makes your writings tend towards dullness. 184 **And, in all**.....**will** your mind is deeply influenced by this "Humour" of dullness at all times whatever may be the type of composition on which you may happen to embark, Cf. Shadwell's conception of "Humours" in his Epilogue to "The Humorists".

"A humour is the bias of the mind
By which with violence 'tis inclined.
It makes our actions lean on side still
And in all changes that way bend the will."

185 **Mountain belly**—your huge well-rounded belly protruding from your body. See Notes on line 25. 185-6 **Nor let**.....**likeness**—Do you imagine that because you share with Ben Jonson a corpulent body you will be entitle to all his other virtues also? (Both were also drunkards) 186 **Tympany**—swelling of the body as a direct result of accumulation of gas in the stomach. Tympanites is the swelling of the abdomen caused by air in intestine etc (C. O. D.) 186 **Tympany of sense**—Prof Hales interprets this to mean "no healthy growth but a dropsical expansion." Dropsy is an unhealthy swollen state of the body due to the accumulation of watery fluid. This meaning (says Prof Hales) is exactly illustrated by way Macaulay says of Dryden's own plays in his *Essay on Dryden* "The swelling diction of Aeschylus and Isaiah resembles that of Almanzor and Maximin no more than the humidity of a musch resembles the tumidity of a boil. The former is symptomatic of health and strength, the latter of debility and disease." 186 **thine's**.....**sense**—your faculty of perception and insight are not a healthy growth under normal conditions of development but kind of dropsical expansion in

your *fat body* (better described as fatty degeneration) 187 **A tun of.....writ**—though huge and corpulent physically (like a big cask of wine, suggesting Shadwell big size and his habit of drunkenness), you are intellectually very poor. Dryden describes Shadwell in the character of 'Og' as "goodly and great" a 'monstrous 'mass', a tun of midnight work, etc in part II of his '*Absalom and Achitophel*'.

Comment : The quality which is specially distinguishable in Dryden's satire is the fund of truth at the bottom of it, viz Shadwell's corpulence and drunkenness. But Dryden at long last consigns Shadwell to his legitimate sphere of speciality viz "humour" of dullness by making fun of his '*corpulence*', his manner of satire proves the grossness of the taste, peculiar to the age, and he definitely fails to maintain his usual attitude towards his victim viz that of a cool and not ill-humoured scorn. 187 **In thy.....writ**—is a fact which can be easily understood from your huge corpulent body. 188 **Kilderkin**—a small cask for liquids with a capacity of holding 120 gallons. **But.....wit**—Although your body is huge, your intelligence is indeed very poor. 189 **Like.....creed**—Flecknoe says that like his own writings Shadwell's are quite as ineffective either as satire or as tragedy. Shadwell's tame verses drag themselves out somewhat monotonously. 190 **Thy tragic.....sleep**—your tragedies are ineffective because they only amuse instead of appealing to our sense of pity, sympathy and awe, and chastening the heart while your comedies produce a soporific effect inducing us to sleep. 191 **with whate'er.....write**—your satire never hurts, however much you may be desirous of wounding and even though your heart may be full of poison. **Gall**—bitterness, rancour. 192 **Thy.....bite**—your satires never hit the target, being pointless and silly.

Comment. It is true that Shadwell accuses Dryden of certain definite misdoings and mis-sayings in the almost incredibly scurrilous libel which he sets down in his answer to Dryden's "*Medal*" But to say that Dryden is not

piqued by it at all by Shadwell's "*Medal of John Bayes*" is not a fact. If that were so why indeed, did Dryden take so much pains to reply to it in his "*Mac-Flecknoe*"? It was the malignity of Shadwell's *The Medal of John Bayes* caused Dryden to write a special satire on him alone—*Mac Flecknoe* (1682). The most severe of all personal satires in English except perhaps "*The Vision of Judgment*." Dryden considers Shadwell's heart as "felonious" (cruel) as he is an extreme whig, mimical to the king. 104 **It does but****dies**—when you take up your Irish pen (being descended from Flecknoe, the Irish poet). The malice in your heart rots within you as you have not. The power to express this in terms of all, as Shadwell complained that "he had been represented as an Irishman, though Dryden knew perfectly well that he had only once been in Ireland, and that was but for a few hours" (Quoted by Saintsbury Dryden, Page 76) 195 **Purchase**—win. **Keem Iambics**—satirical verse. Iambic—from iambus—a metrical foot (U—) from Greek iambos, a lampoon or satire. As Aristotle says in *Poetics* (IV.9) (Hence so the iambic verse is now so called because in this metre they used to *iambize* (satirise) each other." A typical example is furnished by Dryden's '*Mac Flecknoe*' mild anagram—words, phrases formed from the letters of another" (P. O. D.) a kind of frivolous pastime of early 17th century e. g. the words radical reform can be made up into rare mad frolic, (See Disraeli's *Curiosities of Literature*—article on literary Follies and Addison's paper on false wit in his 'spectator' number 63) An anagram is a change in a word from a transposition of letters as Juno transformed into Uno. An acrostic is a short poem in which the initial letters of the lines spell a word. 197 **Thy command**—the exercise of your talents in order to attain mastery. 198 **some**.....**province**—some harmless pursuit for exercising your wit. 199 **There those**.....**raise**—try to shine in the realm of acrostics in order to exercise your wit and talents, giving up your ambition of ruling over the world of letters. **There**—in that particular kind

of intellectual pastime or recreation. **wings display and altars raise**—poems (in which first or first and last letters of lines form words as in an acrostic) in lines of different lengths so as to resemble) the wings of birds or an altar—a kind of mechanical pastime. Such poems used to be circulated among friends. **Note** “Fashionable poets between the end of Elizabeth’s reign and Dryden’s time were fond of amusing themselves with these inanities. Verses were arrayed in forms of wings, altars, gloves eggs and the like” (J.C.C.) 200 **torture**—twist out of natural shape. **Torture.....ways** the same word may be twisted and turned out of its original sense and used in different sense or forms in the same sentence—an ingenious intellectual exercise 201 **different talents suit**—by way of finding out scope for exercise of your varied capacities or talents. 202 **Set.....lute**—set your own songs to tune and sing there to the accompaniment of your musical instrument.

Substance : 203-209 Sudden comic exit of Fecknoe after the forecast and endowment of Shadwell.

Scarcely the last words of Flecknoe after his forecast been spoken when he suddenly made himself scarce through a trap door which opened below. As he disappeared, his mantle consisting of a coarse woollen robe was wafted upwards by a sudden gust of wind from below and fell upon Shadwell, thereby endowing him with twice the measure of stupidity transmitted from the father to the son.

203 **He said etc**—the last words of Flecknoe’s forecast (vaticination) were hardly audible. 204 **Bruce and Longville prepared**—the allusion is to an amusing scene in Shadwell’s *Virtuoso* (Act III) where Miranda and Clarinda at the instigation of Bruce and Longville abruptly cut short Sir Formal Trifle’s loquacity by causing his sudden disappearance through a trap door, on the floor of the stage. (J.C.C.).

Comment—By making use of Shadwell’s own device Dryden puts an end to Flecknoe’s vaticination and victimises Flecknoe by a trick invented by his son’s comic

genius—a parting kick of Dryden before the curtain is finally rung down—the master-stroke of the satirist. 205 **declaiming bard**—refers to Flecknoe specialising in bombastic language. 266 **Sinking**—as he went down the trap door which opened suddenly below his feet. **drugget robe behind**—his robe of “Norwich drugget”, left behind but immediately thereafter it was wafted upward by a squall of wind blown from below. 208 **The mantle etc**—the mantle fell etc—the reference is to the mantle of Elijah falling on Elisha (II Kings. II 134) Elijah was his favourite disciple. When Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, his mantle fell on Elisha who became his successor, in response to his prayer. “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon his son Shadwell who was thus double endowed with dullness. 208 **prophet’s part**—refers to the young poet Shadwell. 209 **double portion**—twice the measure of dullness. **father’s art**—Flecknoe’s poetic genius.

Abbreviation used.

C.O.D.—Concise Oxford Dictionary.

J.C.C.—Edition by John Churton Collins.

P.O.D.—Pocket Oxford Dictionary.

S.C.D.—Smaller Classical Dictionary.

J.W.H.—Edition by Hales.

APPENDIX I

ANNOTATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

(Mostly from University Papers)

(1) This Flecknoe.....absolute (3-6)

(*Bombay B. A. 1940*)

While summing up the career and achievements of Richard Flecknoe, Dryden says that like Augustus Caesar who ruled over the Roman Empire and exercised sovereign power for 44 years, Flecknoe was without dispute the most worthless writer of his age without the slightest claim to merit. He ruled over the realm of nonsense fighting a relentless crusade against sense for upwards of fifty years at long last when he grew old, he realised that even a supreme monarch who had reigned for long, must yield to fate, like all things human.

(2) Besides his goodly.....supinely reign (25-28)

(*Bombay B.A. 1939*)

Giving reasons justifying the greatest claim of Shadwell to succeed him in the throne of Dullness, Flecknoe says that the latter's huge body seemed to be destined by Nature to be the receptacle of a very poor brain. Like an oak tree of huge dimensions overshadowing smaller but more useful trees in the forest, his portly figure, though presenting a sumptuous sight, is majestic enough but really grounded in stupidity so as to enable him to exercise his sovereign power in a dull lifeless manner.

(3) Heywood.....tautology (29-30)

(*B.H.U., B.A. 1953*)

Like Shadwell, Heywood and Shirley were also birds of the same feather in that they were prolific writers but without any claim to merit. They were fore-runners of

Shadwell in this regard but Shadwell outdid them all in that he was notorious for his foolish repetition of unnecessary words and phrases. He was a veritable "apostle of repetition". It is needless to say that more than one writes, the greater will be the likelihood of one's repetition.

Comment : It is very unfair of Dryden to speak of Heywood and Shirley in these terms. Heywood's chief strength lay in the domestic drama. Charles Lamb, the great Shakespearean critic called him "a prose Shakespeare". Shirley the author of the famous dirge ("The glories of our blood and state are shadows not substantial things), is also unjustly disparaged by Dryden.

(4) Methinks.....nail (43—44) (*C.U., B.A. Hons 1959*)

Richard Flecknoe was rewarded by the king of Portugal for his exhibition of musical skill and poetic performances. While in this connection Flecknoe remarks that his own achievement was but a prelude to the greater glory to be achieved by his son. He visualises Shadwell making his mark as a leader of a band of musicians in the presence of King Charles while sailing in a boat before the royal barge. Dryden is reminded of Arion, the celebrated Greek musician, who was wafted to his island home by dolphins charmed by his song when he had been thrown overboard by the sailors conveying him to Lesbos. Dryden ironically compares Shadwell to the great Arion. It is the water of the river Thames and the music produced by Shadwell and his party that suggest the comparison to Dryden.

Comment : It is to be noticed that Dryden adopts the epic style of "vision" in the mock heroic manner of his comparison of the nondescript Shadwell with the celebrated poet and musician of ancient Greece.

(5) So just, so like tautology...Villerius more (56-59)
(*C. U. B. A. 1962*)

This is how Dryden compliments Shadwell's wonderful versification of his rhymed opera *Psyche* adding, with devastating irony that the rhyming was so excellent that it was

not so much a repetition of stupid monotony Singleton, an eminent musical performer and actor swore never to play any more the ludicrous role of Villerius a heroic bandmaster appearing on the stage with lute and sword in each of his hands.

Note : Villerius, Grand Master of the knights of Malta, is one of the leading characters in Devenant's dramatic opera, *The Siege of Rhodes*. A long lyrical dialogue between Villerius and Soloman had been ridiculed in the *Rehearsal* as combination of lute and sword, (J.C.C.) which symbolises the absurd coexistence of military and musical characters in one and the same person. Dryden's point is this. Shadwell's performance as a bandmaster was so outrageous that Singleton swore to give up the heroic but comic part of Villerius.

(6) Great Fletcher never...vanished minds. (79—82)

The Barbican 'Nursery' situated in the most disreputable suburbs of London, was of all places selected for enthroning Shadwell in order that he might rule over the kingdom of the nonsensical in literature in direct succession to Flecknoe. It was a kind of Nursery or training ground of boys and girls for the stage. Of course neither the great tragedies of Fletcher nor the great comedies of Ben Jonson found favour there ; only wretched interludes and low comedies rotten farcial stuff like "*The Humours of Simkum*" (in which the role of the chief character is given to a cobbler, specialising in "the gentle craft" of shoe making) were the greatest favourites there.

Note : The references are to the celebrated John Fletcher, (the coadjutor of Beaumont and one of the most distinguished of the Elizabethan dramatists) and Ben Jonson (the great comic genius and the greatest scholar and classicist of his age). The buskin or high heeled boot is synonymous with the Greek Cothurus which was worn by actors when acting tragedy and so symbolized tragedy, just as the

sock or low heeled light shoe was worn in comedy and so symbolized comedy. (J.C.C.)

(7) Pure clinches.....words (83-84)

(*Bombay B. A.* 1940)

Continuing his description of the Barbican 'Nursery' (Shadwell's theatre in Golden Lane) Dryden says that here the dramas of third rate poets inhabiting disreputable suburbs of London found acceptance because low class people who formed the audience of the Nursery, were really incapable of appreciating anything better. They were incapable of appreciating the humour of Fletcher and Jonson and only such miserable humour as is represented by Panton (a celebrated punster of the day).....was applauded by the audience.

Note : A clinch or clinch is a pun or play on words. Which Dryden condemns as miserable "Suburbian muse" means suburban poets who were too poor to live in the fashionable parts of London.

(8) But worlds of Misers.....Bruce (91-93)

(*Gau. B. A.* 1958).

The astonishing fecundity of Shadwell is referred to here. He was a prolific writer of dull dramas with their equally dull characters. Indeed the ancient dramatist Dekker had promised long ago that here in this Barbican Nursery would reign supreme a mighty prince of dullness, who would wage perpetual war against sense. A number of stupid dramas like *Psyche*, the *Miser*, the *Humorists*, *Hypocrites* (possibly an adaptation of Moliere's *Tartuffe*) etc. and a host of absurd characters would derive their birth from his pen.

(9) At his right hand.....state (108-9)

(*D. U. B. A.* 1959)

These two lines describe the scene immediately preceding the coronation of Shadwell as prince of Dullness. The abdicating monarch Flecknoe sat high on a throne made of

Introduction) that it was not fair from the literary point of view for reasons set forth already. But a piece of literary retaliation for return stroke Dryden had ample provocations although he had never given Shadwell any direct cause of offence (viz (1) Shadwell's disparagement of Dryden's "*The Empress of Morocco*, with Crowne, because of his jealousy of Dryden's acknowledged position as leader of English dramas for over 20 year ; (2) Shadwell's sneers at Dryden on many occasions in his critical prefaces ; (3) political hostility as Shadwell was the poet of the whigs ; (4) Savage attack by Shadwell in his the Medal of John Bayes, (5) Virulent attack of his heroic drama by Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* in which Shadwell is believed to have collaborated etc.

Q. 11. Indicate the broad outlines of development of English satire from the earliest times to Dryden and Pope.

Ans. 11 See General Introduction Chap III Section. 2.

INDEX TO DRYDEN

• A •

: C :

: D :

: B :

: E :

: F :

Flecknoe (Richard)
115, 125,

Fabric 120
Fogs 120
Forswore 129
Fletcher 133
Fopling 147

: G :

Gentle George 147

: H :

Heywood 121
Hight 131
Humourists 136
Hypocrites 136
Herringman 139
Hannibal 140

: I :

Increase (Noun) 116
Iambics 156

: J :

Jonson 134

: K :

Kilderkin 155

: L :

Lucid 120
Lyre 116
Lute 123
Lambent 140
'Love's Kingdom' 141
Loins 142
Lore 142
Loveit 147
Longville 157

: M :

Maximus 133
Muse 135
'Misers' 136
Mangted 138

: N :

Norwich	126
Nursery	132
Northern dedications	150
Nicander	152
New humours	153

: O :

Ogleby	138
Omens	143
Oblivion	143

: P :

Passing-alley	126
Psyche's rhyme	127
Pile	136
Punks	133
Panton	135
Potent	142
Poppies	142
Presage	143
Pit	147
Purloin	153

: Q :

Quill	150
-------	-----

: R :

Raymond	136
Romulus	143

: S :

Shadwell	120
	(Int)

Shirley	121
---------	-----

Supinely	121
----------	-----

St. Andre's feet	127
------------------	-----

Shingleton	121
------------	-----

Socks	134
-------	-----

Simkin	134
--------	-----

Suburbian	135
-----------	-----

Stationers	139
------------	-----

Sinister	142
----------	-----

Sedley	148
--------	-----

Sir Formal	149
------------	-----

Strain	143
--------	-----

: T :

True blue	112
-----------	-----

Tautology	122
-----------	-----

Treble	125
--------	-----

Tiber's brook	143
---------------	-----

Transfuse	153
-----------	-----

INDEX

179

Tun

155 'Virtuoses'

146

Tympany

154

: W :

: U :

Whilom

123

Unfledged

133 Watling-street

138

Uction

141 Western main

146

: V :

: Y :

Villerius

128

Vanished minds

134 Yeomen

138

APPENDIX IV

INDEX TO DRYDEN

(IN THE INTRODUCTION)

(The reference is to the pages in the Introduction only)

DRYDEN JOHN		position as dramatist	22, 25
Birth and ancestry	8	songs in his plays	21
school days	8	Lyrics	21
at cambridge	8	character of	81
earliest poems	9	his satire	15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 38
state of literature at the			40, 44, 47
Restoration	4, 5, 6	didactic poems	17, 25
marriage	11	Pufuces and dedications	
early literary work	9, 13		24, 78, 13
period of dramatic		prose style	25, 26
activity	11, 15	literary criticism	25, 26
position as a		aptitude for translation	17
dramatist	22, 24	poetry, as a poet	19, 82, 83
conversion to Roman			79, 82
Catholicism	16	Pope and Dryden	34, 44
period of translation	17		45, 46, 47
As a writer :			
The heroic couplet		Critical estimate	69, 82
	24, 32, 78, 79, 39	place in English literature	80, 86

Works of John Dryden

The heroic stanzas	9	Essay on Satire	1, 14
Essay of dramatic poesy	9, 13, 26, 82	Absalom and Achitophel	15, 20, 23, 33
Britannia Rediva	9	Mac Flecknoe :	16, 20, 34, 9
Astrae Redux	9	42, 34, 36, 45, 48, 75, 57, 60, 61	
Epistle to Lord Chance- llor	10	Religio Laici	16, 20, 57, 86
The Wild Gallant	11, 23	The Hind and the Panther	16, 21, 22, 86
The Rival Ladies	12, 23	Ode for St. Cecilia's day	
Conquest of Granada			16, 20
	13, 24, 54	Fables	17
The Indian Emperor	13	All for Love	13, 38
Tyrannic Love	13, 22, 23	Almanz or and Almalude	
Maiden Queen	13		13
Aurangzebe	13	Prefaces	25, 26
Annus Mirabilis	13, 20	The Medal	32, 56

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